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PULPIT TREES

AND

HOMILETIC UNDERGROWTH;

BEING

DISCOURSES, SERMONIC SAPLINGS, OUTLINES,
AND GERMS.

BY

REV. THOMAS KELLY,
PHILADELPHIA.

FUNK & WAGNALLS,
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I.

SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPHY.

"Cans't thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, here we are."—JOB, xxxviii., 35.

LIGHTNING is not a thing of yesterday, then. As a phenomenon in the heavens, it was as common in the days of Job as it is now. It rode the crests of the clouds and flung its corruscations through the fields of immensity four thousand years ago, as fraught with energy and death as it is today.

Possibly Job may have seen the massive trees on the hills of Arabia dashed to splinters by the lightning, or human beings killed by its stroke; for he seems to have looked upon it as something that would not tamely submit to human dictation or control. Whether he knew the philosophy of lightning, or the facts of science, as taught

in modern times; or whether, when he spoke of "sending lightning," he only uttered an unconscious prophecy of what was to be actualized in the future, we of course cannot positively say. No thoughtful reader, however, can fail to observe that many of his observations on the laws and phenomena of nature are singularly appropriate and confirmed by the facts of science, up to the present hour.

Nature's great laws and forces are the steeds of the Almighty. Some of them are, indeed, wild and fiery, but none of them too much so to be halter-broken and harnessed by man, and made to carry him forward in the pathway of progress. Indeed, the degree of civilization and progress attained by any people or nation is exactly indicated by the extent to which mere human power is supplemented or superseded by these great laws and forces, in the industries of its people. Since the days of Franklin, what marvelous progress has been made in the study of electricity, and how it has been utilized for the benefit of man. What marvels it has wrought in annihilating time and space. It enables men in distant cities to converse with each other, as though sitting in adjoining rooms. It has converted the world into a mere

whispering gallery — flung around it a network of wire; and we "send lightning," careering over states, over rivers, under oceans and over continents; so that, almost as soon as the voice in which it was spoken has died away, the word is written on the other side of the globe.

The embarrassing intervals of time and space are practically unknown quantities in human intercourse now, as compared with fifty years ago. Men, hundreds of miles from each other, can converse by telephone on business, politics or pleasure, with greater ease than if they were standing on opposite sides of the street. Distant nations are thus brought within speaking distance of each other. Great Britain and the United States—the two greatest nations on the face of the earth—the great radiating centers of civilization, commerce and religion—can now "send lightning" and bid each other good morning and God speed, in spite of the mighty Atlantic that rolls between them.

These constantly improving methods of human intercourse—this almost perfect medium of national and international communication—I shall use to illustrate the more perfect medium of communication between earth and heaven, a medium planned and perfected through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

In Eden, through the short, unsullied section of human history, man had no need to send communications, or make his requests known to a distant God. God was then present, and "in the cool of the day," walked among the trees of the garden, in personal and loving intercourse with man." But "Adam appears to have been unable to retain God and the garden at the same time, so he left God at one side of the trees, and he got on the other. An Eden in a sinless state might be a spot to be coveted, for aught I know, but our Edens in this world are always scenes of temptation, and very often they become the birthplace of crime. Adam and Eve were so comfortably fixed that they lost sight of God. The garden of the Lord concealed from them the Lord of the garden. The creature obscured the Creator, and God did not turn Adam out of paradise until Adam had turned God out."

This terrible catastrophe of the fall broke the bond of harmony and love between them, and by this fearful, moral convulsion man's spiritual gravity was shifted, and turned the other way, and to some dread unknown infernal centre, downward weighed. God was no longer a magnet to attract, but a Being to repel. Continents of moral space and gloom lay between them, with neither power nor desire on the part of man to return, and as yet

no medium of recovery announced. But God did not long allow this starless night of desolation to cover his fallen, self-ruined creatures. A medium of communication was announced in the "seed of the woman;" the gift of "His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." We do not know to what extent God made known to Adam and Eve the facts and details of this wonderful plan. No doubt their information was much more minute and comprehensive than the few meagre facts recorded would lead us to suppose.

Immediately, therefore, and as the condition of their approach to God, the blood of Calvary began to be typically poured fourth, and flaming altars rolled their incense to the skies. "And Abel, he brought the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof," That is, he killed, as sacrifices to the Lord, the fattest and best in his flock. Animals were not slain in those days for food, not until after the flood, in the revelation through Noah, were they granted as such. Looking back, in imagination, to the beginning of fallen human history, I can conceive of nothing more profoundly impressive, to Adam and Eve, than to witness for the first time the death of an animal, and that as the me-

dium or condition of their approach to God for pardon and eternal life.

On, downward, through the patriarchal dispensation, we find that men held intercourse with God through the blood of the promised Saviour, typically shed, in their sacrifices. The economy of Moses was afterwards instituted, during which time men held intercourse with God through the medium of divinely appointed priests, "who offered gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people." Instead of offering their own sacrifices, as formerly, they handed them over to the priests, who stamped them with their approval, and presented them before God. But these methods were tedious and indirect, and "could never make the comers thereunto perfect, as concerning the conscience." They were something like the old methods of carrying the mail by stage or on horseback, as compared with our lightning express trains and telegraphic communications. It also gave scope for the selfish part of our nature to operate; for it not only involved considerable time, but was very expensive. The tenth of all their income was demanded for the support of this ritualistic and priestly economy, and the firstlings of their flocks had to be presented in order to hold intercourse with God.

Many of our apparently devout, but tight-fisted,

modern professors would soon loose the spirit of devotion, if they ever had it, if God demanded a bullock or a ram as the condition of their approach to him. They would abbreviate their supplications to the eliptical brevity of a telegram, and never ask a reply, if God demanded the firstlings of their flocks to pay for the despatch.

In the fulness of time, therefore, Jesus Christ came to "open up a new and living way to the Father." As the great antitype of priest, and altar, and sacrifice, he did away with them all, by offering one sacrifice for sin of infinite merits, and therefore of eternal duration. Single handed and alone, and in the face of the most terrible discouragements, he prosecuted and completed the work of laying this glorious line of intercommunication between earth and heaven. The last span of the mighty cable was laid amid the agonies of death, as, crushed by the pressure of the gigantic enterprise, he bowed his head and cried, "It is finished."

This new line was not in thorough working order until the day of Pentecost. Indeed, I know not that it was much used or thought of until then, for of what use are telegraphic appliances without electricity. But, on the day of Pentecost, all the batteries were charged, and the proper connections made, and so the divine electricity came down "as

a rushing, mighty wind, and sat as cloven tongues of fire upon the heads" of the hundred and twenty believers. And, as Peter stood up to deliver his message, he was so charged with this subtle spiritual afflatus, that shocks from the divine battery, passing through him, penetrated the multitude — moving them to penitence and reformation; when three thousand messages, and I know not how many more, were sent along this "new and living way," every one of which received a direct answer from God. The broad invitation now is: "Come, for all things are now ready." Jesus Christ says, "I am the way."

"No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Without money and without price, in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known unto God," Jesus Christ is the only medium through which fallen man can approach and hold fellowship with God. No man can either send or come to the Father in any other way. This glorious medium of intercourse is permanent and lasting, in every practical phase of its working. Being securely fastened at both ends by the concrete of the human and the divine, and uniformly strong throughout, it remains unhurt by the flight of time, and unimpeded by the malignity of wicked men and devils. Ever since "it was fin-

ished," the catfish and porpoises of skepticism, and the eels and swordfish of infidelity have been pushing and nibbling at it. But their little harmless efforts, together with the friction of the mighty billows of time, have only given it a smoothness and a polish which nothing else could have imparted to it. And now, after nearly nineteen hundred years of trial, it abides as perfect and as serviceable as ever, equal to every emergency—the joy of the present, and the hope of the future.

Voltaire boasted that he was going to destroy the religion of the Bible, and that, "In less than one hundred years, Christianity will have been swept into destruction, and passed into history." But he was swept into that region himself some time before he finished his job. Many caught up the broom of his logic and sarcasm, as it fell from his palsied hands, and have managed to continue the sweeping; but the great infidel's prediction has most signally failed. The hundred years have passed away. Voltaire himself has "passed into history," and not very respectable history either; but the grand old line remains unbroken and unmarred. And the old press used by him to print his infidel publications, I am told, has since been used to print the word of God, and the very house where he lived is packed with Bibles, from base to

roof, and is used as a depot for the Geneva Bible Society.

Yes, blessed be God, this grand cable of intercourse, connecting earth with heaven, for salvation purposes, still remains unbroken and unmarred, and the last man of the last generation of Adam's race will find it as free and as swift to waft his petitions, to the ear of the Almighty, as the apostles found it on the day of Pentecost. Every man must be his own operator, in making his requests known unto God. None need send their prayers to the office of the Virgin Mary, begging her to forward them, with a word of intercession at the bottom. There are invisible wires connecting the soul of every man with this divine battery, and not only making it possible for him to pray, but actually prompting him to pray.

It is one of the most perfect and wonderful spiritual devices in God's moral universe. In sending a message by telegraph to a distant office, the operator must call at that office to see if the operator is there and ready. In small villages and out of the way towns the office is shut for hours, and all night and Sunday, so that, during those times no despatch can be sent or received. The most urgent despatch I ever tried to send, was never sent for that very reason. The operator, see-

ing my anxiety, did his very best; he called and called, but could get no response. But there are no such delays and disappointments in connection with this telegraph between earth and heaven. The great operator is always at his post, is never too busy to hear, is never confused, and is always ready to reply to every message.

Let us listen to what he says about it himself—"It shall come to pass, in that day, that before they call I will answer." That is, when they are about to call and see if the way is clear, he will save them the trouble, and say: "Send on your despatches; behold, all things are now ready;" and while they are yet speaking, he will hear. That is, before the prayer is well begun, he will get the drift of the whole message, and while they are yet speaking the answer shall arrive. Blessed be God, brethren, some of us know a little about this quick business. This explains how it is that we have been so often filled with the Holy Ghost before we had well begun to pray. When —

> "Joy through our swimming eyes did break,
> And meant the thanks we could not speak."

O, may we all be on the alert for new accessions of heavenly impulse and power this morning. Let every soul be open to receive the currents of divine

influence that are moving among us this hour. Ask for the descent of the old-fashioned, primitive power, so bountifully promised, and which made our fathers so potent in his hand.

My unconverted hearers, do not allow this service to close without giving yourself to God. He wants to bless you. Let him. Never mind, though your prayer may not be well worded. He can understand you. The prayer of the publican will do, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Say it from the heart. God help you.

II.

SHAMGAR.

Shamgar, the son of Anath, who slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad.—JUDGES, iii., 31.

THIS is one of the most singular and astonishing battles in the history of the world. To my mind, David's renowned victory over Goliah is nothing in comparison with it. If Shamgar had been stationed in some Thermopylæ, where the foe could only come one or two at a time, it would not have been so wonderful; but he was in the open field, literally surrounded by six hundred desperadoes, bent on plunder and death. It gives us some idea of what pluck can do for a man, when fired with the love of home and country.

Prior to the captivity, idolatry was the prevailing sin of the Jews. Through the corrupting influ-

ence of the surrounding nations, they were constantly led away from the true God to the worship of idols. In order to open their eyes to the enormity of their sin, God sent many judgments and calamities upon them, using their very tempters, the surrounding nations, as a scourge to drive them back in penitence to himself. In the days of Shamgar, great degeneracy prevailed, and the land was devastated by the Philistines and others, who spread terror and desolation throughout the country. The products of the soil were trampled into the earth, or otherwise destroyed; the whole land was desolate; commerce of all kinds was abandoned, and even law was publicly violated and defied by these desperadoes, who regarded neither God nor man. The people dared not travel on the highways, for they were infested with robbers and murderers, who made no secret of their mission, so that honest men were compelled to crawl about in ambush, and creep through byways, in going from place to place. They secreted themselves about the wells and watering places, making it dangerous, often fatal, to "come hither to draw."

It would be difficult to conceive of a more terrible state of things. And the most painful fact, in their bitter experience, was, that they had brought it all upon themselves. This is an ancient page in

human history; but it is a true picture of life in modern times. It has its counterpart in the history of individuals and communities in our own day. Alas, how many calamities smite us,—how the enemy devastates our souls; what days of darkness we suffer,—all as the result of our own folly and forgetfulness of God. Those devastating cyclones, those awful baptisms of fire and flood, and the terrible ravages of anarchy and communism which have been visiting the world so frequently of late, and which for some reason seem to select our own citizens as their favorite subjects, are not without their lessons of admonition and warning. Verily our land is full of idols,—idols of greed and gold, and pride and passion, before which the people are, bowing, and offering that which rightfully belongs to God.

In this state of discouragement and demoralization, it seems that Shamgar was more hopeful than his neighbors. He had not given up in despair, by a long way, but was busy ploughing, when six hundred Philistines hove in sight, or entered upon his possessions for the purposes of plunder and destruction. Burning with indignation at the thought of the condition of his country, and it may be to protect his home and family, he sprang forth, single-handed and alone, and with no weapon but

an ox goad, and he never halted until the last man lay dead at his feet. To my mind, there is something wonderful, almost miraculous, in this strange battle and unparalleled victory. I wonder, first of all, how he could muster courage to face so many, and how he escaped when surrounded by such a multitude. I wonder, also, that, when the Philistines saw that they were being slaughtered at every blow, and that they had no power to injure their mysterious antagonist, that they fought on and stood their ground until the last man was slain.

They were truly a band of plucky fellows, or, when they saw their number reduced to two or three dozen, some of them would have taken to their heels. It only shows that men may have courage in fighting on the side of evil, without a particle of truth or righteousness to inspire them; that they will sacrifice their lives on the altar of a bad cause, as well as a good one. No people should be such liberal givers, and none should be so willing to sacrifice comfort and even life, as the Christian: and yet, it cannot be denied, that sinners are much more prodigal, in their outlay of money, time and health than they.

In the effort to gather up the practical lessons suggested by the text, I shall briefly notice:—

I. That men determine their future by the

manner in which they meet the duties and provocations of the present. God never selects a lazy, idle man, when he is going to choose a person to do some noble work. He promotes none but busy men. Shamgar was plouglling when the Philistines came upon him. It speaks well for him that he had heart to plough at such a time, for the whole country was thrown into great fear and discouragement. Few men. I am inclined to think, had courage enough just then to plough. Such men are an inspiration and a blessing to any community. They tend to inspire confidence and courage, and turn the people's attention away from the gloomy and depressing side of things. Such men in the church are of priceless value. What a blessing, in times of religious apathy, or divisions, or misunderstandings, to see a Shamgar here and there, working away as hopefully as though nothing had occurred. God bless the Shamgars in our churches, who at such times plough and sow, and are busy getting ready for a harvest, as though unconscious of the fact that the enemy is close by and in the spirit of mischief.

I am profoundly anxious to inspire in the hearts of the large number of young men before me, an all-controling desire to be holy and useful. Grace to enable you to live such a life is blessedly

within your reach, and whole-hearted decision for God and duty will bring you into its possession. You cannot learn too soon to put no dependence in luck; on the false maxim that "circumstances make men." Men make themselves, if they are ever made, and circumstances only help them to succeed, when intelligently and manfully engaged in the enterprise. Circumstances, instead of making, many times unmake, and too often ruin men. Like Shamgar, you have land to plough, soil to cultivate; you have your habits and character to form, your standing ground to clear in society, and by giving scrupulous, God-fearing attention to these, circumstances will help you to success, not otherwise. Like Shamgar, also, you must not be governed by the conduct of those around you; and, like him, you will have much to discourage you, and many enemies to oppose.

In your efforts to get an education or prepare yourself for an honorable calling or profession, you will find the Philistines of discouragement and indecision pouring in upon you. The truant spirit that shrinks from hard work, the difficulties in the way, and the example of the gay devotees of amusement and pleasure will come trooping out before you, and the manner in which you dispose of them is going to determine your whole future.

You must manfully grapple with and overcome them, or they will overcome you.

You must cut and flay them without mercy, or they will minify your attainments, and smite your whole life with barrenness. Alas, how many young men are worse than failures, because they are lured by the witchery of pleasure, or deterred by the difficulties between them and success. Many a young man has come forward and placed the hands of his ambition on the top rail of some noble purpose or profession. His movements were hopeful, and produced high expectations in his friends as to his future. Everybody thought he would scale the obstacles in his way, manfully overcome all opposition, and speedily master the situation. But the Philistines of discouragement or pleasure came along and he took off his hands, and never put them on again.

How many of our young men act in this way, in reference to the greatest of all matters, a religious life. In times of revival they become interested, and produce the hope that they are really converted, and are going to be a blessing to the church and the world; but they take their hands off and go back again into sin. The Philistines, of one kind or another, freighten or fascinate them from the path of duty, and thus the morning of

their life is spent in sewing thistles and briers for their future harvesting. So far as we can ascertain, Shamgar was an humble, laboring man. Yet his heroic conduct on this occasion brought him into notice, and raised him to be one of the judges of Israel. The world is looking for men who can bring things to pass. The book of acts is a young man's best diploma. Noble deeds are the stairway leading to greatness and honor. Multitudes are busy seeking greatness and renown; but the majority, if not "thieves and robbers," are "climbing up some other way," and if they succeed there will be thorns and thistles in the pillow of their consciousness, because of the very means used in securing success. If you would be trusted, first learn to be honest; if you would rule, first learn how to obey; if you would rise to a more important position, fill the place where you are to overflowing with yourself, and God will soon beckon you to a wider sphere.

II. That, in the absence of success, it is poor logic to throw the blame on our instruments or surroundings. The workman is more than his tools. The spirit and skill of the worker tower above his surroundings, and give value and significance to the instruments he wields. Shamgar fought this battle with an ox goad. Those who have seen it

tell us that an ox goad is a rod or shaft, seven or eight feet long, and two inches in diameter at the larger end, which is flattened and fitted with an iron scraper for the plough, and the smaller end was armed with a small, sharp iron point to urge on the oxen. There always has been a strong tendency in human nature to blame some thing or somebody, in case of failure. It appears to have been about the first palpable manifestation of human guilt and depravity. "The woman that thou gavest me."

And so, people are constantly finding fault with their surroundings, who ought to be finding fault with themselves. They do not comply with the true condition of success, and then throw the fault of failure on their instruments and surroundings. They say, "If I only had good influences at home; if my early advantages had been better; if I were only among consistent Christians, who appreciated me and gave me fair play, then I could get along and be somebody." My dear brother, allow me most emphatically to say, No,—a thousand times, no. Look to your own spirit, and to God more and to your surroundings less.

In the matter also of Christian experience, many indulge the notion that their circumstances make it almost impossible for them to ever amount to

anything in religion. They have neither joy, victory, nor rest: and they experience a sort of satisfaction in the notion that their circumstances are all to blame for it. They think almost any person could serve God easier than they. If they were only placed in the circumstances of some others, the world should soon hear from them. The language of their hearts often is, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest." My brother, you cannot find rest by fleeing after it. Rest is not "away." Rest is here and now, or nowhere else in the universe for you, in your present attitude before God. However discouraging your circumstances, if you give yourself fully to God, and walk in the full honors of uprightness before him, the great Captain of our salvation will not only give you blessed foretastes of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," but he will also enable you to cut your way to victory, through all the spiritual Philistines that may confront you, even though your instruments may be as insignificant as those of "Shamgar, the son of Anath, who slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad."

III. That, in our life work, we should be natural, and use the instruments we know best how to handle. Shamgar fought with the ox goad. He

knew so well how to handle it that, at close range, it was a terrible weapon to come in contact with. He could kill more men with it, in a crowd, than with sword or musket. He knew the spring and feel of it so perfectly that every stroke brought two or three Philistines to the ground.

So, in fighting the great battle of life, every man should use the style or weapon most natural to him. The question should not be, what style of weapon do others use, but what can I use most naturally and with the greatest effect. Better the sling and stone of David than the untried, cumbersome armour of Saul; better the ox goad of Shamgar than the most polished and approved weapons without the ability to use them. But is a man never to improve? Yes, always. Every man should improve as much as possible, both in style and matter, and a humiliating sense of the need of improvement in both is quite compatible with fine attainments in culture, and also in grace. Honest devotion to duty, coupled with a holy ambition to improve and be better equipt for duty, all things being equal, will yield you a constantly growing efficiency in your work. So that, a quarter of a century after your first efforts in public, you could hardly be recognised as the same person.

Not that your individuality will be destroyed,

unless you shamefully play the ape, that will remain. Improvement does not mean the destruction of our personal characteristics, but the pruning and training of them. No accession of real power or efficiency can be obtained by trying to mimic somebody. What we want, in order to our greatest possible efficiency, is, not somebody else's way of doing things, but our own, trained and sanctified by the grace of God. No two persons are exactly alike; and so, there are phases of work which each individual is constitutionally fitted to do, which no other person can ever do quite as well.

IV. That new instrumentalities should not be condemned, simply because they are new and out of the regular order, but should be judged and valued according to their results.

As a weapon of destruction the ox goad was unknown up to this time; but, judged of by its results, it was worthy of high appreciation, and I am inclined to think that the great joy of the Jews over their glorious victory was not marred, for a moment, by the thought of the meagre, unheard of instrumentality by which it was won. It may be that, in the past, the church has been a little too conservative in the matter of new agency; that she has been too much inclined to condemn any agency that was not officially sanctioned or techni-

cally approved. In her strong prejudice against irregularity, innovation, she has failed, no doubt, to utilize many agencies which would have greatly added to her efficiency. During the past fifty years, however, a great change has been wrought in this respect. Lay agency, male and female, is called into requisition now, and the fact stands out prominently before the world that some of the most useful and highly honored workers in the church today are not found in the ranks of the ministry, but among the laity. The churches recognise this fact, and some who used to be the most bitterly opposed to such workers, are now among the foremost in using them. The fact is not flattering to ministerial pride, I confess; but still, the fact is there all the same, and the stern question that confronts us is: "What are you going to do about it?"

There is nothing that carries conviction like the logic of facts, and nothing succeeds like success. The Jews needed no evidence beyond the six hundred slaughtered Philistines to convince them that a tremendous battle had been fought, and that the agency which won such a victory was not to be ignored or laughed at.

God uses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence, and to teach us that with his blessing no

agency, however weak, can fail: and that, without his blessing, no agency, however strong, can succeed. Think of one man against six hundred, with nothing in his hands but an ox goad. Brothers, in the great fight for truth and righteousness, let us gird ourselves anew for the battle, and may we gather fresh inspiration from our meditation upon this singular incident, and learn how to face fearful odds, when God and duty call. You may not be as well qualified for the work as some others; but still, God has a work for you to do, and he will help you to do it, if you do your best and trust him. It may be that your sphere is humble and obscure, but you can live a noble life and do grand work in obscurity. All workers are not at the front. The most important and heroic workers in society live and die in obscurity. Many of these are Christian mothers. They are never heard from pulpit or platform; they never blow their own trumpets, or sound their own praise; but they are training the men and women of the future. They have the young men, the hope and glory of our country, in their hands. The influence of their sanctified, motherly hearts is flung around the rising manhood of the future, pervading them as the very atmosphere they breathe. God is grandly using and singularly honoring many persons in

our own day, who are neither cultured nor wealthy; persons who might be regarded as mere ox goads of society, both in letters and social position. Some of the greatest evangelists of our own day teach us two lessons: (1.) That sanctified individuality is the condition of usefulness and the great want of the times. (2.) That the vast majority of Christians have talent enough to become each a mighty power, in the hands of God, to hasten the millenial glory of the future. There can be no doubt about this, for our God is "the same yesterday, today, and forever;"—the God of "Shamgar, the son of Anath, who slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad."

III.

MYSTERIOUS FAILURE.

"Why could not we cast him out?"—MATT., xvii., 19.

OUR transfiguration extasies are of but little practical value, unless they send us down with greater sympathy for the sorrowing sufferers in the valley, and with augmented power to bless and do them good. The bright cloud that had overshadowed them on the Mount soon disappeared, as bright clouds generally do, and Tabor's extasies gave place to the seething multitude, and Satan's destructive power in the valley. Such is Christian life in its best estate. Tabor's glory, where we should like to tarry and build, is succeeded by scenes of suffering and wretchedness, of satanic malignity, which move and sadden the

heart. Our sweetest communion with heaven is frequently followed by our most terrible conflicts with hell.

The transfiguration glories had just been experienced, and they had scarcely reached the valley, when this importunate, sorrowing father rushed into the presence of Jesus, and on his knees besought him to heal his son. He told him the terrible condition of the lad, and that he had "brought him to his disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus rebuked the multitude, and especially the disciples, for their unbelief, and then, turning to the father, he said: "Bring him hither to me." Notice the noble confidence, the dignified ease, the positive conviction of adequate power: "Bring him hither to me." He had just been wrapt in transfiguration glory, but that did not augment his power. He had just been talking with Moses and Elias, direct from glory, but that did not increase his power. Long before that, Gadara devils trembled at his presence, and at his word fled in terror from their possessions. Long before that, there was life-giving power in the hem of his garment, resurrection power in his voice, and heaven in his benediction. "Bring him hither to me."

He healed the lad, greatly to the amazement of

the crowd, and the delight of the crest-fallen disciples; their humiliating failure was constantly in their minds; so, as soon as they got away from the crowd, they eagerly asked Jesus the question, "Why could not we cast him out?" I shall bring out the practical teaching of the passage by observing:—

I. That the honest efforts of God's servants may sometimes end in failure. "Why could not we?"

In material things, it is easy to add up or subtract, strike the balance, and ascertain the results of one's labor. But in spiritual matters it is not so. Just in proportion to the spirituality of our work, just in proportion as we seek to operate upon the intellect, sensibilities and will, will we find it impossible to tell whether we succeed or fail in any given instance. "We cannot tell which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." But the healing of this boy was so connected with the palpable and material, and independently of his own volition, that the effects could be seen immediately, if the cure had been wrought.

(1.) It was a conscious failure. "Could not."

They failed, and they were fully aware of the fact. Christian teachers, as already intimated, must remain in ignorance as to the results of much of their labors. No doubt, we sometimes fail when we think we succeed, and succeed when we think

we fail. But in the case of this lunatic lad, there was no possibility of doubting the fact that he was still possessed of the devil.

(2.) It was a failure without a redeeming feature. In the pulpit, men sometimes atone partially, at least, for failure, in ending up their discourse, by the good impression they make at the beginning; others wipe out the unfavorable impression made by a poor stammering beginning by winding up their discourse with a melting pathos, and a burning eloquence, which suffuse and sway the audience and awake them to extasies. Many men would be justly regarded as great preachers if they continued to deepen to the end of the sermon the good impression they make at the beginning. But the disciples did not even preface their failure by a hopeful beginning. Indeed, so far as casting out the demon was concerned, they did not begin at all. The demon was only disturbed, not dislodged; his hold was unbroken, and he was wrought up to such a pitch of infernal desperation that the poor boy's life was more than usually endangered. Learn, here, the tremendous truth, that ministers of Christ, unequipped by the Holy Ghost for their work, may do more harm than good in a community; they may stir up the demons, but may have no power to cast them out. That a ministry which does not

through Jesus Christ hold sovereignty over evil spirits may only agitate and disturb society, and provoke the devil, by their abortive efforts, to acts of desperation and mischief, which he might never have thought of else.

(3.) It was a public failure.

If this had occurred on the wayside, with none present but the lad and his father, it would not have been so bad, for they could have given some plausible explanation, and talked the father up into hope again, by assuring him that Jesus would heal his son. If this lad had been brought by a friend, that they might test their power, by experimenting upon him in secret somewhere, it would not have been so bad, for then they could have pledged each other to secrecy and silence. But it was done in public, and witnessed by the multitude. The caveling, captious Pharisees and doctors of the law were present and saw it, and went into extasies over the failure. No political party ever gloried in the downfall or disgrace of its opponent as these Pharisees and doctors of the law gloried in the downfall or disgrace of Christ and his cause. You can imagine how they would chuckel and rejoice over this victory, and how they surrounded the crest-fallen disciples, and by their taunts and jeers threw them into humiliating and embar-

rassed silence; all with a view to making them and their cause unpopular and disgusting to the multitude.

(4.) It was a humiliating failure.

It was not a Samson, or a Goliah, possessed of herculean strength, and a legion of devils. Then, there might be some excuse from the exceptional nature of the case. It was not a man, even, but a lad, and he possessed of but one devil, who proved more than a match for the united faith and efforts of nine men. How humiliating! Nine men, too, who claimed to be the divinely credentialed heralds of the kingdom of Christ. The devil, in one lad, defeating Christ in nine men.

II. That the failure of God's servants may sometimes be a mystery to themselves.

"Why could not we?" They had honestly tried; they, no doubt, had done such things before: they certainly did afterwards. What was the secret of their failure, then? There is something mysterious about it. Everything appeared to justify them in looking for and fully expecting success.

(1.) They were Christ's chosen disciples.

They had not chosen him, but he had chosen them. He had called them from their worldly vocations to be his followers, and to devote their lives to his service.

(2.) They were Christ's recognized ambassadors. He confirmed their call by imparting to them, as the credentials of their mission, the power to work miracles in his name. They had not run before they had been sent. It is possible to do such a thing as that; a man may run without God telling him to run. Many men in the ministry ought never to have been there. From all that can be seen to the contrary, God would have been glad to have excused them, if they had turned their attention to something else. Indeed, I sometimes think it would be a great blessing if many who are in the pulpit were in the pews, and if many who are in the pews were in the pulpit.

Some of the poorest preachers I ever knew were the most positive of their divine call, and that they should be eternally lost if they preached not the gospel. But all who heard them saw that they were hopelessly lost already, so far as the subject and the edification of the people were concerned. One of the most abused expressions in our language, and which, but for the ignorance associated with it, would be nothing short of blasphemy, is the following: "I do this for the glory of God, because God wants me to do it;" or, "I did or said that because the Holy Ghost told me to do it"

Human nature is so strangely constituted, the

tangled web of human motives is so difficult to understand, and our likes and dislikes of certain modes and spheres of action are so strong that it is one of the most difficult things in the world for men, especially those of impulsive temperament, to be positive that they are being led by the Holy Ghost. It is not safe for any man to enter the Christian ministry from his own promptings, and from the conviction that he is called to that holy office. The safe way is to consult the convictions of others, as well as his own. He will be more likely to find the Holy Ghost, in the convictions of the church on that subject, than in his own convictions. But the disciples could have no doubt as to their call. The Saviour himself had called, commissioned, and sent them forth. Notice, also, that they had not overstepped the bounds of the sphere in which Jesus intended them to operate. The very terms of their commission specified the item of work they had just now tried to do, and failed: "As ye go, preach, cleanse the leper, raise the dead, CAST OUT DEVILS." And no shadow of proof is to be found that, in their efforts to cast out this demon, they used their own name, or any other but "the all-prevailing name of Jesus." Do you wonder, then, that, with such a commission, and such a Saviour, and such an honest effort, they

were surprised, dazed, thunderstruck, at such a failure: and that, seeing the demon cast out with such ease by the Master, they should eagerly ask him, "Why could not we cast him out?" It was a mystery, a palsying blight, for which they eagerly sought an explanation.

But look out for the men who, though they have failed in their God-given task, are privately telling Jesus about it, and asking him to show them the cause. The world shall hear from such men again, and Pentecostal power shall crown their efforts and attest the divinity of their mission. The disappointment of the disciples is a hopeful feature of their case. It is a good sign when a man comes to know that the devil is too much for him, and that without a new accession of power he cannot be overcome. The disappointment of these men showed that, although they had failed, they had honestly tried to succeed, and an honest effort to succeed is far from being a trifling thing. God has not only a crown and a "well done" for the man who comes from the battle flushed, and laden with the trophies of victory, but also for the man who stood at his post and fought manfully, but failed to win the day.

What we should be most concerned about is, not the results of our labors, but that we should be

downright honest and hearty in our efforts to obey God. As a Christian teacher, I have nothing to do with the results of my labor: "God giveth the increase;" but I have everything to do with the spirit and motives by which I am actuated. To every honest soul who has tried to work for the Master and has failed, I would say, do not be discouraged, or spend your precious time in brooding over your failure, and over what might have been. "The mill can never grind with the water that is past," therefore get ready to utilize the water now coming into the floom of your present surroundings. Deep disappointment, in the presence of failure, means a noble ambition to succeed, which God will not fail to honor in his own time and way.

One fruitful cause of failure among Christian workers is, that we are not sufficiently definite, in the object at which we aim. Indeed, we sometimes forget to take aim at all. Instead of sighting our firearms on our knees, we shoot at random. But Satan is never frightened from his possessions by a random shot, or the bow drawn at a venture. We blaze away at the crowd, and take it for granted that somebody is going to be wounded.

We want more sharp-shooters, men who can sight a single soul and claim it for God and his cause,—men who can single out persons and definite ob-

jects, and forgetting everything else, go right for them. The failure of some need be no mystery, even to themselves. They are more anxious about the report and flash of their firearms than they are to pour shot and shell into the enemy's encampment, or capture the rebel flag. And some of them even vary the quantity of amunition to suit the taste of the king's enemies, until their weapons become so harmless that they neither recoil at the breach nor kill at the muzzle.

I do not wish to appear uncharitable, but I fear that some in the pulpit are out of harmony with the spirit and genius of the gospel. The awful condition of man, under the guilt and dominion of sin; the ample atonement made and presented; the duty of all to accept salvation now, and the fearful and eternal consequences to those who neglect are things they talk about, but do not appear to realize or feel, with the tremendous force of a living faith in their reality. A wide field of observation justifies me in fearing, that many active workers in the church and Sunday school are backsliders. They have been so concerned and busy about other people's vineyard that they have forgotten their own. Many who talk religion straight on, and grow vehement, even unto tears, are backsliders, and the fact is no mystery to those who know them best.

The home life of some ministers and Christian workers would blight and render powerless for good all their public efforts, if it were known. That such men do not succeed in Christian work, and only make wicked men worse by their presence, is not at all mysterious, but perfectly in keeping with the nature of things.

In conclusion, I would say to all Christian workers, who mourn over their want of success:—

(1.) Question yourselves about it, "Why could not we?"

The cause of failure may be so palpable that you cannot help seeing it, if you try. If you see it, do not ask Jesus what it is, but tell him what it is. Be assured that you will find the fault on the human side, somewhere, never on the divine. Are you quite sure that you took aim,—that you did not shoot at random,—that you did not seek to exalt your own name and glory, rather than those of Jesus Christ? Are you conscious that you are in harmony with the spirit and genius of the gospel,—that you have not backslidden in heart or in life from God,—that, in seeking to cast out devils, you did it in the name of Jesus Christ? If you are positive on all these points, you have a right to take comfort, and feel a bracing satisfaction, even under the gloomy shadow of defeat.

(2). Question Jesus about it, "Why could not we?"

Jesus loves to hear a man state his case, pro and con, and ask for light and help. Ask him, then, to show you the cause of your failure, if you cannot see it yourself, and he will. Ask him to grant you a fresh anointing, and the baptism of power, to go forth again at his bidding, and he will. Never forget,—

(1.) His abiding nearness,—"With you always."

(2.) His willingness to help and bless,—"Ask, and ye shall receive."

(3.) His ability to equip and qualify those he called into his service,—"All power is given unto me." Let a sense of the importance of your work thrill and inspire you. Feel, as you have a right to feel, that you are compassed about by the mercies of God, as a bather is compassed by the sea: and let your faith lift you up where you can shout victory, before the sword of battle is drawn. Dash into the conflict under the inspiration of the fact that you are backed up by treaty stipulations with the Infinite, and therefore cannot fail. And like the the seventy, you will, ere long return rejoicing that even the very devils are subject unto us through his name.

IV.

THE BORROWED AXE.

"Alas, master, for it was borrowed."—II KINGS, vi., 5.

IF Elisha were living in our day, his illustrious name would be encumbered by a more imposing title than it bears in Scripture. It would likely be,—Elisha, the Prophet, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Divinity, and Teacher of Ethics, Gilgal, Palestine. In his position and character, he possessed vastly more than is included in this title: and yet he is set forth by the simple but significant title "Elisha, the servant of the Lord;"—a title more honorable than all the societies and universities in the world could confer. He was head master of the school of the prophets, held at Gilgal, and in this chapter the number and quality of his students are brought

before us. It may be that the school had grown in popularity since the selfish, grasping Gehazi was compelled to resign his office as janitor of the institution. For, having full charge of all the provisions and equipment, I am inclined to think that Naaman's case was not the first or only time he had lied to his master, and laid hands on what did not belong to him. But, be that as it may, the school had become very popular, and such was the number of young men that flocked to it, from all parts of the land, that the building was too small to accommodate them. Many students would have been glad of this, as an excuse for idleness and folly. But such was the thirst that these students had for knowledge, that, sooner than loose the instruction and inspiration of their illustrious teacher, they proposed to build a suitable house for themselves. They respectfully submitted the project to Elisha, for his approval, which he appears to have given with promptness and pleasure.

It would seem that both the size and location of the old building were objectionable, being quite to the southwestern extremity of the country, and involving a considerable outlay of time and money, in coming and going. The new building was therefore to be located further north and west, in the valley of the Jordan, much more central and pleas-

ant. The text refers to an accident that befell one of the students. As he was felling a tree on the brink of the river, his axe slipped off the helve and fell into the water.

The water must have been deep just there, and likely none of the boys were good at diving, for they seem to have got the impression at once that the axe was gone beyond recovery. He was very much perplexed at this, and told Elisha of his misfortune; referring to the most distressing fact in the unfortunate occurrence in the words of the text: "Alas, master, for it was borrowed." "The man of God said, where fell it?" The young man showed him the place. And Elisha cut down a stick and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim. Then Elisha said: "Take it up to thee, and the young man put forth his hand and took it." In attempting to present the practical lessons taught and implied in the text, I shall notice:—

I. That it is the privilege of God's people to expect and receive divine interposition, when overtaken by trouble or misfortune, in any laudable undertaking.

The enterprise in which these young men were engaged was both laudable and praiseworthy. Truly they were students of a noble type. They had a genuine thirst for knowledge, and for the

spiritual instruction which their noble teacher was so well qualified to impart.

So, when the old school house became too small, instead of playing truant, or burdening their fathers with the expense of a new one, they manfully propose to shoulder the responsibility of putting up a new building. I gather from the narrative, that these young men were poor, and had little or no influence with people of rank and position. The college building they proposed to erect was for the public good, and should have been built and paid for by the government. But the wicked rulers, Ahab and Jehoram, reigned in Israel and Judah, from whom neither sympathy nor support could be expected.

So, as has often been the case, the cause of God and humanity was left out in the cold, and had to sink or swim by its own efforts. Thank God, that at such crises, all along the ages, men of the right mettle have been found. Men who knew what was the right thing to do, and had the pluck and purpose to do it,—men who were willing to roll up their sleeves and shoulder their axes, to toil and to sacrifice, to advance and establish the kingdom of God. The misfortune that befellthis young man was unusual and unexpected. His axe flew off the helve. But who ever thought of loosing his axe, if

it should slip off the helve? Yes, but it fell into the water. Learn here, that just how and where a thing occurs may make all the difference in the world, in regard to the consequences. "Into the water!" What an unusual, perplexing occurrence. How trivial it would have been, if it had fallen on the land. Such is life. It is the unexpected that happens.

It is what may be called the stupid and vexatious occurrences of life, that cause much of our daily trouble and disappointments. This young man was evidently careless, or he would not have allowed the axe to come clear off. It slipped, little by little, and if he had not been stupidly indifferent to the tool he was wielding he would have seen what was wrong with the axe, and wedged it on before it came off. Yet, even in these very troubles, which a little attention would have prevented, and which, but for our own stupidity or recklessness, never should have occurred, it is our privilege to expect God's interposition and blessing.

God wrought a miracle in behalf of these young men; but it was not wrought either to get out the stuff, or to put up the building. He had already given them the mind, muscle and will to do all that: and their success in the undertaking would be a corner-stone in their character, that would

enable them to bear heavier burdens of toil and sacrifice in the future. God never does for us what he has given us the power to do for ourselves.

If, in the proper spirit, we go forth to build a house for him, or for ourselves, he is with us to oversee the job; but he expects us to keep our axes sharp, and manfully to wield them. I also learn from this narrative that, if a poor man should have no axe, and not well able to buy one, that God has no objections, if he should go to a neighbor and borrow one. Nay, that God may go to that neighbor before him, and unconsciously to himself, it may be, incline him to lend the axe. Nay, further, God will be with that man, in his honest toil, and render him all the assistance that is necessary to enable him to return that borrowed tool.

II. That it is the privilege of God's people to look for and receive divine interposition, in seasons of legitimate anxiety and worriment.

Every honest man should feel worried, who has borrowed the property of another and cannot return it according to promise. Christian people, especially, should be very sensitive on this point. I have known church members who appeared to have had absolutely no conscience in the matter of returning what they had borrowed. They would

borrow and promise, but had no sense of honor, in the matter of keeping their word.

A religion that does not make a man honest and truthful is spurned and ridiculed by the world, and justly so, for it is worse than no religion at all. This young man had a noble sense of honor and equity about him. He was disappointed, of course, that he could not prosecute, with his companions, the work they had set their hearts upon to do; but his deepest sorrow arose, not from the thought of the axe, but from the fact that "it was borrowed."

Possibly that axe belonged to some laboring man, who mostly got his living by it, and therefore might have looked for work on this job, rather than a tax upon his benevolence. If such was the case, it was very kind of the man to lend it. The young man's anxiety was both legitimate and proper. It was not an evidence of unbelief, or a want of trust in God. A lazy, unprincipled man might have been glad of the occurrence, as a plausible opportunity for idleness; but he was in great distress, not so much from the value of his loss, as from the fact that what he had lost was not his own, but "BORROWED."

As I look at the divine interposition, in behalf of this anxious, disappointed young man, I draw

lessons of encouragement and comfort for myself, as well as those who hear me today.

(1.) Let us be sure, first of all, that the business, the enterprise out of which our troubles arise, is legitimate and proper.

(2.) That we entered upon it in the right spirit. That, during its prosecution, we sought to go in and out under the smile of God.

(3.) That our troubles are not the result of our own ignorance, indolence, or sin, but from causes we did not suspect, and over which we had no control. The axe is off, and in the water. Legitimate anxiety and worriment from unusual and unsuspected quarters..

Unthought of troubles arise in your family, in your business. You have money to pay and liabilities to meet, all of which at one time you saw your way clear to do. But your customers have failed largely to pay their bills; one is bankrupt, another has shifted his property; one pays you in part, and another pays you nothing. And so it goes. In the meantime, unusual and heavy demands are made from other quarters, and must be met; serious affliction in the family has caused a heavy drain, and you worry about the "borrowed axe." You tremble, lest your reputation, as a man of truth, will be impared. You worry, lest the good opinion

of others, which you so highly prize, shall be destroyed. You are fearful, if this state of things continue, that your business will go to destruction, and your family be reduced to want. My brother, I frankly admit that your anxiety is reasonable and legitimate. But you must not forget that there is a God who made and governs us, and that in temporal matters as well as spiritual he hears and answers prayer. Put your trust in him, and confidently ask his interposition and guidance. Our God, who helped this young man, in the mere matter of a "borrowed axe," will not fail to come to your relief, in some way, and make your lost blessings to swim before your wondering eyes.

The zeal and energy of this young man brought him this trouble. I suppose that some men could have used that axe all day, and it might not have slipped a quarter of an inch. But he swung it as a man who intended to make the chips fly. Therefore, I should say it came off, and all this trouble came on. So, the man who works with both hands heartily, in felling souls for the spiritual temple of the Lord, will be sure to make himself trouble. A cold, formal church and the wicked world will unite to oppose and do him harm.

Indeed, any man who has anything worthy of the name of zeal, in the cause of God, will soon

find cause for legitimate anxiety about himself, his reputation and his work. Especially will this be so, if his trust be at all divided between the Creator and the creature. Some ministers are given to prophesying smoothe things; they never strike to wound; they don't know what it is to see the chips fly, when wielding the gospel axe. Such men never loose many axes; they do not go out on purpose to bring home a brace, a post, or a stud for the spiritual temple. They are out for an indefinite article, and they generally find it. They go out in search of nothing, and they generally bring it home with them.

My brother, if you feel prompted to enter upon the work of felling souls for the Lord's temple, do not be afraid to strike with the energy of a man on fire, with earnestness. Never mind if the axe of somebody's good will and support should fly off and sink into the cold waters of contempt and ridicule. As sure as God is true, such lost friendship will swim again, and invite the forth-puting of your hand to take them, as strong and as efficient as when they first flew from your grasp. God's faithful workmen loose no axes of that kind, that are good for anything, that he does not fish up again and put into their hands.

I say, that are good for anything; the axe of

some people's friendship is not worth putting on the helve, if you had it in your hand. They are more trouble than they are worth; for you must always carry a wedge of special kindness and attention, MADE ON PURPOSE; and even then you will find them shaky and offish at times. There is no work that is more distasteful to a busy, hard-working man, than that of systematically making wedges of special attention, to hold and fasten the goodwill of that class of persons. Yet, it is a fact, that our success, as ministers of the gospel, depends very largely on our ability to make and drive such wedges.

III. That God's method of interposition, in behalf of his people, is frequently through human instrumentality.

Elisha was the instrument God used to help this young man out of his trouble. So now, God often helps us, even answers our prayers, through persons to whom he has given the will and power to do it. There are many striking instances of God's interposition in behalf of his people, in temporal matters. Instances where large institutions are carried on solely on the faith principle. They have no endowment or income but that which comes unsolicited from a God-prompted people. God always honors the faith of the man who

swings out on the promises, in the full conviction that they will float him.

A poor man was sitting at his open door with heavy heart, and eyes swimming in tears He had been unfortunate in business, was owing a small debt, and was about to be brought into court by his creditor. He cried mightily to God for guidance and help. As he sat thus in his open door, a little bird flew into the house and perched itself in an empty cupboard. He closed the door, caught the bird, put it in an old cage he happened to have, where it soon began to sing and feel quite at home. Suddenly, a knock came to the door, but, instead of the officer he so much dreaded, it was the servant of a wealthy lady, inquiring about the bird. It was a very costly one, and the lady thought the world of it; but by some mishap it had got away. The poor man gave him the bird, glad that he was able to cheer the good lady so promptly. It was not long until the servant came back and said: "You have done my mistress a great kindness, for she sets a high value upon that bird. She is greatly obliged, and wishes you to accept this trifle with her thanks." He took it, and to his great delight it proved to be the exact amount that he owed. Rationalism would call this

only a singular coincidence; but faith would call it a divine interposition, and so indeed it was.

Now, if God's guidance and blessing may be obtained in temporal matters, with how much greater confidence may we approach him for his guidance and blessing, in the spiritual work in which we are engaged. When the cause of God languishes,—when dearth and barrenness have smitten the hills of Zion, and God's people are at ease,—when most of the workmen have lost their energy, as well as their axes, it is our privilege to cry mightily to God for the restoration of our lost blessing, and confidently expect his interposition. For disciplinary purposes, which we may not yet be able to understand, God in his wisdom may see best to withhold temporal blessings. And financial embarrassment and business disaster may be entailed with a view to the same beneficent end. So that, in praying for temporal blessings, we can never wisely use the imperative mood. The little subjunctive "if" is as far as wisdom dare go, in asking God to bless us in temporal matters. "If it be thy will." But it is not so in spiritual things. The power and prosperity of the church,—the conviction and conversion of sinners,—the sanctification of believers, and the destruction of Satan's kingdom, are all things which pertain to the glory

of God, and we dishonor him if we use an "if" in asking his divine aid in our efforts to extend his kingdom and glory. It will be of untold service to us, if we firmly grasp the glorious truth that God's infinite power is quite at the disposal of his obedient children. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done."

IV. That, although in this case the interposition was miraculous, the end was not fully secured without human co-operation: "Take it up to thee."

In the divine economy, man must be more than a mere negation,—he must be more than a passive recipient of God's interpositions and blessings. He has raised us to the dignity of co-workers with himself, in the great work of rescuing our sin-cursed race from the service and dominion of Satan. Just as God and man work together in nature, he always doing the supernatural,—producing the seed, and the vast possibilities of life slumbering in the face of nature, and the external influences fitted to call them forth: and man, as though everything depended upon him, clearing the ground, sowing the seed, cutting weeds and thistles, arranging his fields, gardens and orchards, until the face of nature is a very paradise of beauty and blessing. So in the spiritual world, God's purpose is that through

human and divine co-operation: "The valleys shall be exalted, and the hills shall be brought low; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." God inspires and blesses man through man, but there must be co-operation. "Take it up to thee." God never puts the helve in any man's axe, or wedges it on either.

All over christendom, through his faithful Elishas, God is causing the lost blessings of his people to "swim" and float quite within their reach. My brother, the joys of his salvation, which you have lost,—the peace of mind, the communion with God, the victory over self and sin, which have slipped from the helve of your consciousness, God is causing to float within your easy grasp today. And I rejoice to be able to say, on the authority of God, and in the language of Elisha: "Take it up to thee."

Oh, for the eager promptness of this young man, in grasping our lost blessings, In the special means of grace, in which we are now engaging, I want to hear in each one of you the ring of an honest worker. I want each one to go out intending to bring home a brace, or rafter, or post, something to fit into the spiritual temple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and DON'T COME HOME WITHOUT IT.

In order to do this, you will need your axes of spiritual power keen and sharp. The mere helve of a Christian profession will not do. Nor will it avail for you to deplore the empty helve, and say: "Alas, master, for it was borrowed." It was not borrowed. The blessings of salvation which you have forfeited and lost were not borrowed. They were God's free gift, and you ought to have held and prized them, both for their own sake and for the giver. God in his mercy is bringing them quite close to you today, and as I hold these heavenly weapons within your reach, and notice the trifling indifference of some of you, I say, what Elisha would have said, if the young man had been amusing himself, and paid no attention to his floating axe: TAKE YOUR AXE, OR LEAVE THE WOODS.

Reflections: — (1.) I learn from this narrative that God is not displeased with his zealous, wholehearted servant, who by his extra zeal disables himself or looses his axe; and that he would rather work a miracle, to put him in working trim, than to see him lazy and sleepy at his work.

(2.) That every man who has lost his axe of spiritual power must find it again, or so far as he is concerned, the work of God is stopped. That

one idle man among God's workmen, counts more than one in the aggregate of his influence. His very presence will retard the workman and slacken the movements of many.

(3.) That in seasons of misfortune, it is well to be calm, and not by our own impulsiveness and imprudence make matters worse. Like the man I saw in a machine shop who chaffed his hand in attempting to put the belt on a machine, and became so furiously angry that he cut the belt in pieces, but had to replace it, at the cost of nearly a week's wages. It speaks well for this young man that, although the axe was gone, he held on to the helve. Some would have flung it in disgust after the axe, and by the time Elisha got the axe back another miracle would have been necessary to get back the helve.

(4.) That the sinner should not make his case any more desperate by continuing to sin against God. That it is dangerous, unmanly, and very displeasing to God for one to deliberately add to the moral turpitude of his case, thus necessitating a greater miracle of divine mercy, in order to save him. If you have allowed most of your precious time to slip away in sin, do not throw the little you have left after it, in disgust or des-

pair. But tell God about it. Tell him about your lost axe of feeling and opportunity. If you cannot find words to pray, hold up your empty helve, he will know what you mean, and the God of Elisha will make your lost blessings to swim before your wondering eyes.

V.

ALLEGORICAL TIME-KEEPERS.

"Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are diversities of opperations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all.—1st. Cor. xii. iv. 6.

AS Christian workers, we are not in a position just now to judge of each other's usefulness; not even of our own. Our standard of judgment is defective and misleading. We judge too frequently by surface appearances, by noise, bustle, froth. The shallow, fitful stream would outvie the majestic river, if judged by such a standard.

On the face of a watch we find three workers, and a man looking at them for the first time, and totally ignorant of a watch, would be almost sure to conclude that the second-hand is by far the most important and indispensable worker of the three.

"Why," he says, "see what a time it makes,—how active and fussy it is." Yes, that's it. He forms his estimate of its importance and value by the fuss and noise it makes in doing its work, rather than from a knowledge of the inner mechanism, whose movements it simply obeys. But with your pen-knife you can remove the second-hand, and for ordinary purposes the watch would be as good as ever. Even the minute-hand might be removed, and yet, by the steady hour-hand, you could tell within a few minutes of the true time.

So, there are diversities of operations in the church, and we are also liable to form wrong conclusions as to their relative importance and value. We have little, active, fussy men, who must always be on the move and sputter. They can turn round sixty times before another man will turn round once, or even decide whether he will turn round at all or not.* Noble men are these, many of them, and often a great benefit to the church. But they are not always the most reliable, as to spiritual time; nor are they, by a long way, the most important workers in the church. They fill their own little sphere, and God uses them for special work in their own line of things. But we need the steady minute and hour hands; men and women

*See City Temple, for this and other ideas.

of perseverance, purpose and principle,—persons of steady, reliable character, on the dial of whose conduct and conversation the true time is always registered.

I was quite interested, some years ago, as I went into a clockmaker's establishment, in Montreal. It was just noon, and such a striking of clocks I had never heard before. There was all manner of clocks, from the tall, stately looking regulator, with its measured movements, down to the little, fussy clock, not larger than your hand. Every clock did its best, but each in its own way. There were "diversities of operations," but "the same spirit" actuated them all, and that was—to tell everybody that it was twelve o'clock. It was amusing to see little clocks, that you could put into your coat-pocket, start up and tip off the whole twelve before larger and much more costly ones had got more than nicely begun: and, to my fancy, at least, glance across, as much as to say,—"Mercy sake, do hurry up, if you want to learn how to strike, just take a few lessons of us." But it was my imagination that gave birth to this reprimand. In attending to their allotted duties, these clocks did what all Christians should do,—they went to work; they attended to their own business; each did its own work, according to its own promptings, and

found no fault with others, because they had different methods of doing exactly the same thing. About the only effect of a quarrel, among these clocks, would be that they should have lost time, and damaged themselves in the tussle.

(1.) I learn from this, that all Christians should be busy at their great life-work,—that Christian activity, in order to be reliable and comforting, must be prompted and controlled from within, not from without. That uniformity of method is impossible, and therefore, that each should work naturally, in our own way, and find no fault with others, whose movements and methods may differ from our own.

(2.) I learn, also, that the method of doing work is quite a secondary matter. What is the quality of the work done? Has gospel time been kept and struck off, true to the occasion and to the hour?—that is the all-important question,—and your eternity and mine must be songful or sad, according to the answer.

Shakespeare tells us of persons who "Find books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything," and so I have gleaned from my visit to this clock establishment the subject and substance of my present discourse. I shall describe several of the clocks I saw, with a view to illustrating some peculiarities among Christians,

and the "diversities of operations" to be found in the church.

I. THE CLOCK THAT DID NOT STRIKE.

I saw a fine-looking clock to my right, and noticed that it contributed nothing to the noise. I found that it was somewhat different from the others, in its internal construction; while they were so made as to tell the time to the ear as well as to the eye; this particular clock only told it to the eye: you had to look at it in order to know the time.

I see in this silent clock an illustration of the fact that we have some in our churches who don't strike; they do not announce their moral whereabouts, or publicly lift up their voices, in bearing testimony for Jesus Christ.

In my earlier ministry, I was rather radical on this point. I used to think that every true Christian would be sure to strike or bear public testimony for the Saviour. I think still, that, as a rule, all true Christians are made to strike and when wound-up on both sides they will strike. But, now and then, you will come across a person who appears to lack the striking weight, or the bell, I am not sure which. They never sound the bell of a public profession; but, in many cases, if you look

on the dial of their conduct and conversation, you will find it unvarying as the sun.

I have often laid awake, at night, with the query in my mind, I wonder what time it is, when all of a sudden the faithful clock, in the adjoining room, struck off the answer. It is a great blessing to the world, in the midst of its dense, moral darkness, that there are so many noble Christians, who fearlessly publish the true time. One of the wants of the age is a larger number of noble, consistent, holy men and women, so filled with the Holy Ghost, and baptized with Pentecostal fire, that they should be constrained to—

> "Tell to all around,
> What a dear Saviour they have found."

Many around us, and some whom we least suspect, are in a state of wakefulness and unrest. They have either lost the true time or never had it. They may hardly know the cause of their unrest; but they are dissatisfied and unhappy, and with rightly directed Christian sympathy and effort they would gladly accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and enter upon a Christian life. May the Holy Ghost help us to sympathise more with the anxious and awakened, and give us fresh qualtification and a burning desire to help them into the kingdom.

II. THE CLOCK THAT MADE ONLY A BUZZING NOISE.

I noticed another clock that was going through all the motions of striking, but it only made a sort of whizzing noise, without making any person the wiser, as to what it was trying to tell. This clock is an illustration of some worthy, well-meaning sort of people in the churches; they go through all the motions of bearing witness for the Master, but no person can understand them. There is a muttering indistinctness about their utterances, when relating their Christian experience, which wellnigh ruins their testimony, so far as edification and profit are concerned.

Let me say, however, I am convinced that this is, in very many instances, the result of habit, and not the product of inferior Christian attainments, or inconsistency of life. We are creatures of habit, and as we begin, so, unless our attention be called to it, we shall continue. I have now in my mind a most powerful speaker, a man who, on the fourth of July, or on the eve of an election, was wellnigh without a rival, for graceful speech and eloquent utterance. But to listen to him relating his Christian experience, you would actually think that he had been out sheep-stealing the night before, and was afraid that nearly everybody present knew

about it. No person who had ever heard his grand, ringing voice on other themes, and then heard him on religion, would be very much impressed with either the importance or value of the latter theme.

I have wondered at good sisters, whom I have known, whose voices I knew could ring over the way and around the corner, as I listened to them mumbling their Christian experience. I have occasionally happened to see some of these good sisters telling each other the news, in other words, talking gossip and scandal. Not that a Christian lady would ever detract or lend a brush when a friend is blacked, at least, as a mere malicious act; but I have heard them, with tones so emphatic and convincing, with expression of face and eye so impressive, and with the whole bearing indicating so much faith and interest, that I could not help coveting that style for the class meeting, and wishing that their old class meeting style could be used for the gossip and scandal, for then nobody could understand what they said, and would not believe them if they did.

I pray that God may confuse and intimidate the tongues of all scandal mongers, and make his own people emphatic and fearless in their testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to sanctify and save, to the uttermost, all who believe and obey him.

III. The clock that struck too much.

There was a clock to my left that appeared to like to hear itself strike; it struck and struck, until I actually got nervous. This distressing clock reminds one of those who talk and pray too long in our churches; when they begin they never stop till they get through, and they never get through until everybody is tired, and wishing them to stop. Now and again, you cheer up and think they are about through, but they generally skip over the stopping places and go on.

Now, this clock, which was little short of a nuisance, only wanted the bending of a little wire, about the eighth of an inch, and it would have been as correct and orderly as any clock in the room. So, those who pray and speak too long in our churches, only require a gentle word of advice, or private, brotherly suggestion, and the trouble in many cases would be at an end; in many cases, I say, not in all. For, when very highly tempered, the wire sometimes breaks, when you try to bend it, and then I have known them to strike themselves into not very good-natured silence, and scarcely as much as tick in public afterwards.

My advice to any brother whose meetings are being injured by long, unprofitable talkers is this: have less striking, by all means; bend the wire,

even though it should break; better that one or two should suffer than many. Years of experience have taught me that two or three such persons, if allowed full liberty, are enough to wellnigh destroy the good effects of any meeting. Simply for one of these persons to begin to pray or speak is enough to destroy the spirit of devotion in all present, and throw a wet blanket around the rest of the meeting.

While some of these great talkers are good sort of people, I have known some of them to be very poor time-keepers. I have heard them strike off in distinct tones, "Twelve o'clock, spiritual noonday here," when the hands on the dial of their conduct and conversation scarcely indicated spiritual sunrise. If we would have our prayer and special meetings full of interest and power, we must do away, as much as possible, with all pointless, irrelevant talking; we must each be eagerly in search of the true time, and anxious to announce it, for the benefit of others and the glory of God.

IV. The clock that needed starting.

I saw another respectable looking clock just in front of me, and I found that it was not going; I thought, perhaps, it was out of gear, or not wound up, but the gentleman told me that it was in going

order; that he had just wound it up, but was called away, and had forgotten to start it. This silent clock reminds me that there are persons among us who need starting,—persons with whom God has been at work; he has been winding them up, and putting the weight of their sins upon them. They feel those inner promptings which indicate a work of conviction wrought by the spirit of God. They may not be always able to analyze their consciousness, and tell just what they need; but the thing they most need is the gentle touch of Christian encouragement and sympathy, to start them in the path of righteousness.

And in the church, men need starting sometimes. There are many who would pray in the prayer meeting, if they got started. Many would labor grandly in the Sunday school, and in other ways, if they had the right kind of sympathy to start them. Many would give liberally to the church, if they once got started: although I am aware that some men will start almost anywhere, except at their pockets. Many a poor backslider is longing to be what he once was, but he needs the gentle touch of your sympathy or mine to start him. Backsliders could not remain in a church filled with primitive zeal and Pentecostal power. Their pendulums would be disturbed so often that

they would have to move on time, or move out. A great want of the church is a larger number of consistent, consecrated men and women, specially devoted to the work of touching up the waneing pendulums, and starting the ones that are still. Not in an ostentatious spirit,—not placarding their mission on the corners of the street; but in an humble, almost unintentional way,—just in such a way as the Holy Ghost dwelling in the heart can dictate and evolve.

We all need the gentle touch of each others sympathy; I need it as well as you; it puts fresh vigor into us, when we see the naturalness and ease with which others do their work. As ministers, it does us good to hear each other strike sometimes, and notice the swing of each others' pendulums. I have gone to churches and public assemblies, and heard ministers preach with a power and a pathos which actually made me feel ashamed of myself, and almost vow that I would never try to preach again. But I have had reason to thank God for those ministers, and for those feelings of conscious inferiority. Those men gave me to see how live men take hold of their work, and I have always found my own pendulum swinging with greater emphasis after I got home.

V. The clock that was not plumb.

I noticed to my left a clock that was just in the act of stopping. I said to the gentleman, something is wrong with this clock, it's just stopping. "Yes," he said, "it's not plumb, you see, I was shifting the clocks just now, and I set that one down carelessly, and there is something under it."

This leaning clock reminds me that there are persons in our churches who are not plumb. They have set themselves down carelessly, and there is something under them; they are all right, only they have come in contact with something that throws them off the perpendicular.

Oh, how many church members are swayed all to one side by things that are inconsistent with the Christian character. One man is all to one side by an improper intimacy with women; another by intoxicating drinks; another by the love of money; another by the love of fame; another by the love of pleasure and display. My brother, do not allow yourself to imagine that you can possess the religion of Jesus Christ, and at the same time regard iniquity in your heart. If you wedge yourself off the perpendicular, or allow the devil to do it, do not imagine that you are somehow still keeping time. Hear it! consciously off the perpendicular,

and you are either stopped or stopping. While in such an attitude you may ask, but you can receive no spiritual blessings; your faith is a hand without fingers, which, however frequently thrust out, can bring back nothing from God.

VI. THE ONE FEATURE THE CLOCKS ALL HAD IN COMMON.

I noticed amid all the "diversities" of size, mechanism and "operations," that all these clocks had one feature in common, that is: they all had a tendency to run down. Stimulus, not generated in themselves, had to be obtained, or they would soon tick themselves into silence. So, there is a tendency in all Christians to run down. I may preach to you every Sabbath with acceptability and be running down all the time. You may be as punctual as usual at church, and as exemplary as usual in your deportment, and be running down all the time. The pendulum of profession may continue to wag when the mechanism is clogged with the dust of worldliness, or choked with the filth of forbidden pleasures. This is the great trouble with the church. Thousands of professing Christians are not in going order. If you question them closely, many of them will frankly admit that they do not profess to have the true time exactly; and

many who do profess to have it are either deceiving or being deceived. For while the bell of profession may continue to ring, the hands on the dial of their conduct and conversation are still in the old place, or, like the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, carried backward several degrees, now and then.

No Christian can run on time, if left to himself, for a single hour. What, then, must be the condition of those who live loose from God, in their thinking and activities, six days out of the seven. Our churches are overloaded with those eight-day Christians, who are religious only on Sunday, and seem to think that they can drive through the six days without any special help from God. Some clocks are so made that they can run for weeks and keep good time; but I never knew a Christian that could do it, and I have known many who gave it a fair trial. Yes, my dear friends, we must get help from God; we must be wound up, or we shall soon tick ourselves into the silence of spiritual and eternal death, and many shall be ruined, by our reckoning. The church has all the means and appliances that are necessary, to enable her to conquer the world for Christ, before the twentieth century dawns; but her great drawback is, that she is not in working order. She has been tinkering with and trying to regulate herself, and she has not only

lost time but injured the machinery. The wonderful cogs, and pinions, and rachets composing her internal mechanism, are so complicated and unique that no created mind can understand their mutual relations, much less remove the defilement under which she labors.

I well remember my first watch. It was like some church members, not proverbial for the correctness of its internal movements and promptings. Sometimes it would rattle off an hour in fifteen minutes, while at other times it could not make an hour in twenty four. Being my first watch, I presume I had occasion to look at it as often as was convenient, and I am sure the position of the hands on the dial was much more frequently the result of my movements than its own. A good deal of my time was spent in finding out the time and giving it to my watch, by turning the hands into proper position; occasionally I became discouraged, and for days would let it go or not, as it pleased; when I would again start it up, and try to make it keep time.

My father at length, to *save time*, I presume, took it to the watchmakers. I went with him, and I remember how I thought my watch was ruined, as the man took it out of the case, and removed wheel after wheel, until it was all in pieces on the

table; how he could get it together again I could not imagine, but he did: and when the job was done, it could keep its own hands to the true time, without any help from mine. Many in our churches act towards themselves as I did towards that old watch. Their inner mechanism is clogged and deranged by the dust and defilement of sin. They have neither the promptings nor the power to run the way of God's commandments. When they perform any Christian duties it is all mechanical and outside work with them. The hands on the dial of their conduct and conversation are moved to Christian time and places by the mere force of their will, and indeed contrary to the promptings within.

Brethren, are any of you trying to "live at this poor dying rate?" Do you have to goad yourselves to your closet and Christian duties generally, while your hearts are clogged with worldliness, and out of gear with the filth of sin? If so, you know how poorly you have got on in the past, and how far you are at present from the life that God would have you live. In your present state, it will not be better but worse, further on. You cannot keep time *from the outside.* You must come under God's cleansing and regulating hand before you can run the way of his commandments.

He wants to cleanse and put you in going order. Won't you let him? "Without money and without price" is his terms. What say you, my brother, that I may return an answer to him that sent me?

If all our churches would submit themselves to God to be cleansed, regulated, and set to the true time, as indicated by the gospel chronometer, there would be such a Niagara of benevolence, heroic Christian effort, and Holy Ghost power launched upon this sin-cursed world as has never sought the recovery of man. The church would then be able to measure her progress by degrees of latitude and longitude, and not as now, by isolated points and individual conquests.

VI.

CHARACTER OF ZACCHEUS.

"There was a man named Zaccheus, which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich," &c.—LUKE, xix., 1-4.

EIGHT whole verses used in telling us about one little man! Why fill so much valuable space with such irrelevant details? Especially, while so many subjects in which we are profoundly interested are passed over in silence, or touched upon with provoking brevity? "He was chief among the publicans, and he was rich, and he was little." Who cares for this information? What possible interest can we have in knowing the official or financial standing, or even the bodily proportions of a man of whom nobody living ever heard a word, and who died nearly two thousand years before we were born? Why does not this

book, which professes to be a revelation from God, tell us more about the looks and doings of Adam, both before and after the fall,—more about the origin of evil, the intermediate state, or the recognition of friends in heaven, and less about this man Zaccheus?

Such queries, tinctured it may be with a flavor of impatience, may very naturally arise, from a mere surface reading of this narrative. Yet, upon reflection, it will be found that, in these personal portrayals, we become better acquainted with the practical workings of the gospel than we could by any other means. When we see Jesus Christ, face to face with an individual sinner, we have a working, miniature view of the whole scheme of redemption, and we are not bewildered by complexity and vastness of operation, but have the advantage of simplicity, concentration and individuality. One man needs a perfect atmosphere, and nature's provisions for sustaining life, as much as a million of men; so, one sinner needs a perfect Saviour as much as the race. I cannot present what I have to say on this subject in less than two sermons. I shall therefore confine myself, at present, to the consideration of the character of Zaccheus, and in the second sermon consider the conversion of Zaccheus.

I. THE MAN,—"Zaccheus."

(1.) *His nationality.* The name is evidently of Hebrew origin; it is found in the list of Jewish names which returned from the captivity, though abbreviated to Zacci (NEH., vii.–14). It is generally believed by competent persons that Zaccheus was a Jew. That, though forgetful of God, and wicked, he belonged to that honored race out of which sprang the holy seers and prophets of the olden time. That "the same blood flowed in his veins that scaled the fallen ramparts of Jericho; that bade the affrighted sun stand still in Gibeon, and that quailed beneath the dread thunders of the mount that burned."

(2.) *His official position.* "He was chief among the publicans."

No man was allowed to become chief of the revenue in a Roman province, unless he was known to be "rich," or had such a reputation for honesty as would enable him to provide the required security for the faithful discharge of his important trust. In her palmy days, the consummate wisdom of Rome was seen in the fact that every strip of territory,—every conquered province was bound to the ancient capitol by the inflexible authority of Roman laws, and Roman institutions, and the tenacious tie of a common language. So, in order, no

doubt, to allay the spirit of discontent and revolt, the official positions were filled largely by men who were natives of the subjugated provinces. Rome well knew that the best way to hold conquered territory was to so distribute the gifts of the government as to make as large a number of the people as possible feel that it was for their interest to perpetuate the bondage.

"Zaccheus was chief among the publicans," and so, there was at least one man in Judea quite willing that his countrymen should continue to wear the Roman yoke.

(3.) *His financial condition.* "He was rich."

As is too often the case, Zaccheus, perhaps, owed his official position more to his purse than his purity,—more to what he had than to what he was. If he bought his way into office, it is not surprising that he was determined to get back his money before he left. In this selfish world we never find angelic specimens of men, who pay out large sums of money, in order to get into office, with no hope of ever getting it back, but simply for the good of the public. Such noble, patriotic spirits, if they ever lived, like the wonderful children in our Sunday school books, they must surely die young, for we never find them lying around loose in society.

And, in our own day, it is not to be wondered at, that a man who gives large sums of money to buy votes, and rides into office on a flowing whiskey barrel, should try to get back at least his carriage hire, and the outlay involved in the enterprise. From the view I get of Zaccheus, I am not surprised that "he was rich." Those who compass chieftancy and riches are the men who know how to step out of the beaten track, and without regard to sneers or criticism, can "run" and "climb," in order to accomplish their object. He possessed certain traits of character which are the secret of success in every department of human endeavor.

(1.) *He was self-reliant.* He did not passively rely upon others for his inspiration and resolves. He was a man of originality of thought and purpose,—a sort of genius in method and movement.

One of the earliest lessons we should teach our young people is self-reliance,—confidence in themselves and in their transactions. Without self-reliance no person will accomplish very much, either for this world or the world to come. A boy without self-reliance will grow up to be girlish, and a boy that is only a girl will have all a girl's weakness, without any of her attractions or regal qualities. A woman made out of a woman is God's no-

blest work; but a woman made out of a man is a disgrace alike to her sex and her maker.*

Like willow branches, our young men should be so charged with life and self-reliance, that, severed from the family tree and planted in almost any soil, they would at once take root and grow. It is a calamity for a young man to be bolstered up by the kindness of friends, during the formation of his character. God never intended that noble, independent character should be formed by clinging to others, as the ivy to the oak. Plants and flowers thrive in the hot-house or sheltered garden, but the towering oak grows on the rolling hillside, exposed to the sweeping tornado, the fierce dynamics of the atmosphere, and the rude chemistries of the soil. So, the storms, trials and obstacles of life are not designed to blight, but develop and ennoble our manhood,—to call forth those latent harmonies and ennobling possibilities of our nature, which an unbroken prosperity could never evolve, just as the nightingale's song is the inspiration of darkness, and the eagle's grandest flight is the afflatus of the storm.

(2.) *He was prompt and persevering.*

Zaccheus knew how to handle an opportunity. There are hours in life which have the making of

* Royal Path of Life.

manhood and destiny in them, and compared with which all after hours are poor and commonplace: and no man will ever rise to greatness or distinction who cannot successfully grapple with such crises.

It was now or never with Zaccheus, and he appeared to realize it. With the shadow of Gethsemane already upon his spirit, Jesus was passing through Jericho for the last time, was never there afterwards. What earnestness and determination the occasion demanded.

My unsaved brother, Jesus is passing by today. God help you to be in earnest and take care, lest you loose what may be your last chance of seeing him.

An old Latin maxim says: "Opportunity has hair in front, but behind she is bald; if you seize her by the forelock, you may hold her; but if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her." By the style of the man, and the fact that his ancestry is not mentioned, I am inclined to think that Zaccheus began life a poor boy. The majority of those who have risen to riches and honor, have come up through the rough regions of toil and poverty, and were not ashamed afterwards to work with their own hands, though possessed of thousands of this world's goods.

Sir Walter Raleigh relates a cutting reply made to him by the wife of a noble duke, at whose house he had lodged the previous night. Early in the morning, he overheard the good lady giving directions to the servant, in the matter of feeding the swine. On entering the dining-room, he jocosely asked her if the pigs had all been breakfasted. "All, sir, but the stranger that came last night, and I am just going to feed him; be seated, sir," was her witty but sarcastic reply. Sir Walter was mute, as he walked up to the trough. It may be that Zaccheus was the most conspicuous person in the ancestral line for many a day; that his personality towered above the ordinary and commonplace in the family, and flung the sheen of its luster for some distance, both over the future and the past.

Napoleon never pointed to his ancestry, as the source of his unparalelled ambition and achievements, but said—"I am my own ancestry." A patrician once said to Cicero: "You are a plebeian." "I am," said Cicero, "the nobility of my family begins with me; that of yours ends with you." Better be the foundation of a new pyramid than the tapering apex of an old one. Better make your family proud of you than be foolishly proud of your family, with nothing in your conduct

to enable them to return the compliment. A noble ancestry is a priceless treasure; but we live in an age and in a country in which the passport to greatness and honor is not pedigree, but performance,—not ancestry, but actions. The world never had so much room for sterling young manhood as it has today. And never was it more willing to accord it a hearty welcome. No nation on the face of the earth presents so many incentives to young men, to be trustworthy and honorable, as our own country, for every door of office and honor, from the lowest to the highest, is not only unlocked, but ajar, awaiting the coming of such men.

(4.) *His purpose.*—"To see Jesus, who he was."

Why so anxious to "see?" why not be content with hearing? There were thousands who had seen him and formed their opinions as to "who he was," and were not backward in telling them. The Pharisee would have told him: "He is a devil;"—the scribe, "a fanatic;" the priest, "a blasphemer;" the Rabbi, "a heretic;" the poor, "a prophet;" the many, "an impostor;" the few, a "God." Zaccheus could not afford, therefore, to trust to hearsay; and so, like a wise man, he made up his mind to see for himself. He was a good judge of human nature, and could form a pretty correct opinion of a man, by getting a good, square look at him. He

had no doubt heard conflicting opinions and many marvelous things about the great wonder-worker: and now that he had come so near he was intensely anxious "to see . . . who he was."

The noblest purpose that can actuate the human heart is expressed in these three little words: "To see Jesus." Untold possibilities of blessing are coiled up in the purpose, no matter what may be the prompting motive. It is a great blessing that God does not require men to be actuated by the purest of motives, in coming to him. Many a man has enlisted in God's service through fear, who afterwards fought nobly in the thickest of the battle, because he loved the service. The Ninevites might never have been blessed with the preaching of Jonah, if his first sea voyage had not been so rough and dangerous that he was afraid to risk another. And so, the motives of the best of us, if we understand them, will not be likely to minister to our pride. I am inclined to think that Zaccheus was actuated largely by a feeling of curiosity. But even curiosity will do very well to begin with, for Jesus Christ revolutionizes both the man and his motives, once the sinner sees him.

Mr. Moody tells of a man who was such an unbeliever, and so much opposed to religion, that he could not be induced to go to church. One night

a heavy shower came on, as he was walking down the street, and to his great annoyance he found that he had forgotten his umbrella. It was what might be called one of the stupid, vexatious occurrences of life, which so often happen. He knew it looked cloudy,—he intended to take his umbrella, and saw it in the rack; but, in smoothing his hat, he brushed the umbrella quite out of his mind; so it remained in the rack, and he found himself out in the rain. Just a few steps down the way was a public hall, where one of Moody's powerful revival services was in progress. As he drew near, he had no time to parley with his prejudices, for the rain at that instant came down in torrents. So, meeting or no meeting, he dashed in for shelter. The services were going on; the truth reached his heart; his opposition and bitterness melted like snow before the sun, in the strange atmosphere in which he found himself, and he was gloriously converted. We have often heard of people making a cloak of religion, but this man turned it into an umbrella. He proposed to use it simply as a protection from the passing shower, nothing more; but, even to come under religious influences, may mean more than the person thinks. Becoming a Christian is something like preaching a sermon. Almost anything will do to start with, but the effect and value

of the whole business depends on what you do after you begin.

(5.) *His failure.* "Could not for the press, because he was little." Here is a man earnestly trying "to see Jesus," who is opposed and defeated by obstacles he had no hand in producing, and over which he had no control. (1.) "The press," and (2.) "Little of stature." He had no hand in producing either of these, and yet they defeated him. But, was that fair? Has Zaccheus had a fair chance? Whether fair or not, he has had all the chance he will have, unless he makes another.

There are men who are compelled to "run" and "climb," in order to be able to do what others can do without lifting a foot. We boast about men being equal, in this country, but are they? Men may be equal, in the sense of the Declaration of Independence, that is, they are theoretically equal before the law; they may have an equal chance in life, if they can get it; but that is about all in which they are equal.

The experience of Zaccheus, in his efforts "to see Jesus," is a striking illustration of a universal fact in human history. Men are constantly opposed and thwarted, in their efforts to do right, by obstacles and enemies which they never produced. Satan, for instance, is the persistent opposer of all

who seek "to see Jesus Christ." But man had no hand in producing Satan; he was here before man came, and, for aught I know, here because he saw man coming. You may start out to see Huxley, or Tyndale, or any of the great philosophers or scientists, and Satan will pay no attention to you; but if you start out "to see Jesus Christ" he will instantly summon his resources, and form a "press" against you. How persistently he follows the young Christian, with the fascinations of the world, on the one hand, and the "press" of discouragements on the other.

Then the laws of heredity come in and raise up obstacles, the full power of which our limited knowledge does not enable us to compute. We all take on hereditary damage, of one kind or another, from our ancestry. This, of course, is soon rendered vastly more serious by our own moral behavior, and the result is a dwarfed, squattish spiritual stature. So that the ordinary "press" of the world's cares and attractions is quite sufficient to shut us out from God and a saving view of Jesus Christ. So Zaccheus found himself defeated. "Could not." Mark the descriptive words here: "Chief," "Rich," "Could not." Then chieftancy and riches cannot do everything for a man. Official position and wealth go only a little way in removing the

distressing and annoying phases of life. Human power, however commanding and extensive, soon reaches the solid masonry of the impossible, upon which the only thing it can scribble is the little words, "Could not." Let us add another descriptive word, and we shall see how it was that Zaccheus failed. "He was little." The words "little" and "could not" are closely related in human affairs. Every man is "little" somewhere,—"little" in spots. No man is fully hemisphered on both sides of his nature. The word "little" or its equivalent must be used occasionally in writing a true biography of the best of men. Mere bodily littleness is but a trivial defect, which at times indeed my be an advantage; but to be "little" in our love of truth and nobility of purpose,—to be "little" in heavenly aspiration and loyalty to God, is to carry a mortal blemish which will blight with mildew and curse the whole summer of the soul.

Notice the three descriptive words here used,—"Chief," "Rich," "Little." You will see here that it is possible for a man to have his life set on the descending scale, so that the more minutely he is described the less there is of him. In the manward relations of life, some men, both in body and estate, have a propitious starting point; but, in re-

regard to our Godward relations, all men are born dwarfs and bankrupts. We should not, however, allow this fact to discourage us, or throw us into despair; for, by falling in with the divine overtures and becoming "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," our lives are changed from the descending to the ascending scale. Our heavenly Father has so arranged that we all may enter into copartnership with him, and thus develop from dwarfs into giants, and from spiritual bankruptcy into kings and priests unto God, forever and ever.

(6.) *His determination.* "He ran before and climbed into a sycamore." Here we get an idea of the force and fiber of the man. He did not waste his precious time in upbraiding himself for being "little," or finding fault with his surroundings. He simply started off in search of a better vantage ground. No time is more unprofitably spent than that which is used in finding fault with our instruments and surroundings. Zaccheus never should have been "chief among the publicans, and rich," if he had not learned to make a virtue out of a necessity, and turn even failure into a pedestal from which to reach a grander success. When a man's conscious littleness compels him to "run" and "climb," he will master his obstacles and get a better knowledge of things than the men who think

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they can see all there is to be seen without climbing. In a world like this, where we are all "little" in so many places, no man will reach the highest success unless he feels his littleness and knows how to "climb." Civilization is a climbing, a getting up from the degradation and littleness of barbarism to a broader, clearer outlook. A running to God's great sycamores of gravity, light, heat, wind, steam, electricity, and climbing through the ramifications of their branches, from crest to crest, of conquering achievement, out of man's pigmy littleness to the conquest of the world.

But, you say, how shockingly improper for a man who was "chief among the publicans, and rich" to be seen running along the dusty highway and climbing a tree, just like a school boy. No; it was perfectly proper for Zaccheus, and in full accord with the character of the man. He was impulsive and enthusiastic in all he undertook. A slavish attention to the rules of etiquette and the formalities of society, is destroying the usefulness of many of our churches; they are dying of sheer respectability. The members will pass strangers in the aisles every Sunday without the slightest recognition, and the reason they assign is that they were never introduced. Such feeling in such a place are about as unreasonable as the feelings of the hus-

band who unexpectedly came home one afternoon and found a man with his arm around his wife, on the sofa; he glanced at the situation, and quietly returned to his place of business. He told his business partner about it, and he said to him: "What did you do?" "Do," said he, "What in thunder *could* I do? I had never been introduced to the fellow." I have always felt that, *under the circumstances*, it was a great pity the man had not been previously introduced. Most men, however, would have seen their way clear to have broken the silence, at least, *if nothing more*. When we see a stranger sitting in our parlor, we do not wait for an introduction before we speak, neither should we in church, when strangers attend our services. The fact that they attend opens the way for us to take them by the hand, make inquiry as to their church relations and residence, and welcome them back to our services.

What is known as church etiquette is about as much to be feared as the very devil himself. Beneath its cold, critical eye, naturalness in public worship disappears, and religious enthusiasm dies. The earnest seeker, no matter what his temperament may be, must neither "run" nor "climb," but keep his hand steadily on the brakes, and carefully steer through the cold, silent corridors of a

sanctimonious propriety, lest the church should brand him as an enthusiast or fool.

Learn from this narrative that all barriers give way before the man who has made up his mind to see Jesus Christ. Do I hear some one object to this, and say: "Nay, but I did my best 'to see Jesus,' and had fully made up my mind to serve him; but such was 'the press' of sects, and creeds, and critics, and isms that I 'could not;' and, after the most determined effort, was obliged to give it up as an utter impossibility." I must not be misunderstood or unfaithful just now. So, allow me to say, my dear sir, you are not telling the truth, and you know it. You will not dare to make that as your dying statement; nor would you, under all the horrors of damnation, dare to utter it on the judgment day. If what you say were true, your experience would flatly contradict the word of God, would be proof positive that he is not a God of truth. He has declared, "Ye shall find me when ye search for me with all your heart" (JER., xxix., 13); "Seek, and ye shall find" (LUKE, xi., 9); "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (JOHN, vi., 37). Now, if what you say be true, these and all similar scriptures are false, and, as a Christian teacher, I should be unfaithful to my

sacred trust, did I not oppose and hurl back upon its author an allegation so impious and dreadful.

I confess to somewhat of a "press," such as you describe; but it is by no means an insurmountable barrier to an awakened, earnest soul. There may be a "press" and a Babel-like confusion, but a determined soul will always find some external help close by,—some sycamore, up which he can "climb," and thus get a clearer, more comprehensive view of Jesus Christ, by the very "press" that made climbing a necessity. What is our zeal and earnestness good for, if we cannot stir ourselves a little, in times of emergency? Yes, and that man will be dumb and self-condemned at the judgment, who could "run" and "climb" after all manner of worldly objects; but who is limp and lazy in his efforts to become an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

VII.

CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house, and he made haste," &c. LUKE, xix', 5-9.

ZACCHEUS was undoubtedly, up to this time, a worldly, grasping, wicked man; who, though a Hebrew by birth and education, had so far forgotten God, and allowed the love of money to master him, that in his business relations he did not always observe the laws of equity or the principles of righteousness. The impression I get of him from the narrative is, that he was a sharp, shrewd, business man; a man, whose judgment in business matters was unusually good, and who, if he did any business at all, would be sure to make

money. The love of money, and the conscious power to make it, cannot exist in the same person without great possibilities of evil. Their natural tendency is to unduly excite ambition, and inflame the spirit of rivalry. The law of equivalents is likely to be ignored or forgotten, and the spirit of adventure, of wild, hazardous speculation is likely to be indulged. And when such men aspire after political distinction, the temptation is often strong to buy their way into office, and in various ways reimburse themselves during their official terms.

Whether such were the facts or not, in the case of Zaccheus, we cannot positively say. Whether or not he became "chief among the publicans" by a liberal outlay of money does not appear; but if he did, according to his own confession, he was sharp enough to begin at least to get back his money "by false accusation."

But, though Zaccheus was a grasping, selfish man, yet I am profoundly impressed with his independent spirit and individuality of character. He is a striking illustration of the act that neither riches nor worldly position can satisfy the cravings of the human soul; and that a ready response is accorded to gospel overtures, sometimes where we least expect it. "He was chief among the publicans, and he was rich;" yet he felt, in the depths

of his being, "an aching void,"—an unnamed wish, an unvoiced desire for something higher and more satisfying, which the world could never fill.

A mere surface reading of the narrative can give us no adequate idea of the force of character it required to face the tremendous discouragements which Zaccheus had to meet in becoming a folpower of Jesus Christ. I notice just two of these:—

(1.) *He had no character to begin with.* His whole environment tended to keep him as he was. The very social atmosphere in which he lived tended to blight every aspiration and hope of becoming a better man. However badly he might act, he had nothing to loose, for he was already an outcast from society. He was a Jew, who had accepted the position of collecting the taxes imposed upon his countrymen, by the Roman government: and, as Robertson says, "all such were not only looked upon with loathing and contempt, but as traitors to the cause of Israel." Being thus universally despised, he had little to prompt him to even try to be better than he was. Stamped by public opinion as depraved, the tendency was to become depraved. One of the blessed effects of the good opinion of others is, that it prompts men to try to be what others take them to be.

Public opinion is a vast fortress to shield those

who are behind it; but woe to the man upon whom it limbers its guns. The first step downward is to sink in the estimation of others; the next, and by far the more fatal step, is to sink in our own estimation. The poetry and music die out of life, and the world becomes little more than a cheerless prison to a man, when the awful fact takes hold of him that society has voted him as an outcast and a nobody. The great danger is that, just about that time, if never before, he will begin to prove by his conduct that the verdict of society was about right. It is a terrible thing for a man to live in the consciousness of the fact that he has no character to respect or support; and many a poor soul, to get a way from such a gloomy, desolate outlook, has madly plunged deeper and deeper into sin and the fathomless depths of despair.

Such were the discouraging circumstances in which Zaccheus was placed: and his strength of mind and force of character are seen in the fact that he became a follower of Jesus Christ, in spite of all the opposition and contempt arrayed against him. Another serious and humiliating fact which Zaccheus had to face was:—

(2.) *His dishonest business transactions.* "If I have taken anything of any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold." That kind of resti-

tution would soon seriously impoverish the bank accounts of some people. It would compel many of our mushroon aristocracy and sky-rocket millionaires to go to the almshouse, or turn their hands to honest labor, and "earn their bread by the sweat of their brow." Zaccheus does not use the words, "If I have taken anything," as though he were in doubt, and wished to leave a similar doubt on the mind of others. His guilt is clearly implied in his own words. And no person who did not carry the making of a noble Christian character would have made such a declaration,—would have deliberately entered upon a course of life which, at the very outset, involved the unearthing of a life of fraud and dishonesty, which no doubt no person could have proven, and perhaps of which nobody had the slightest suspicion. It is one of the wiles of Satan to get men so helplessly entangled in some network of iniquity that it seems impossible to extricate themselves, and thus bring them to the point where they would rather face the horrors of an awful eternity than the burning disgrace of a revelation, and the equitable adjustment of their wicked doings. Happily, Zaccheus still retained the power to extricate himself and set matters right.

In our first sermon we saw him trying "to see

Jesus, but could not for the press, because he was little of stature." Not in the least disheartened, we saw him starting for a sycamore tree over the way, whose ample branches quite spanned the road along which the Saviour was about to pass. The first view we get of him this morning is, sitting in the sycamore tree, with curiosity, and I know not what more, in the shape of motive, all on tip-toe "to see Jesus," who with the surging throng is steadily approaching. Notice here:—

I. How PUSH AND PERSEVERANCE TURN DEFEAT INTO VICTORY. A few moments ago he was completely defeated,—"could not see Jesus" for the "press." Now he has a better view of him than any man in the crowd. So the earnest seeker will always find that the very "press" of isms, and sects, and critics that surround the Saviour, and which compel him to "run and climb," to think and act for himself, will be the means of securing for him a clearer and more satisfactory view of Jesus Christ than he could have possibly obtained on the ordinary highway of common effort.

(1.) *Observe the movements of Jesus.* "He came to the place,"—he always does. No man ever yet started out with the full purpose to see Jesus Christ and failed. When a man is under the sway of a noble willingness to "run" and "climb," and does

his level best, Jesus always "comes to the place." Some people improve upon acquaintance; others are all the more thought of the less they are known. Jesus has nothing to loose, but everything to gain by meeting people. He always makes a good impression, and never destroys one's good opinion of him. The reason why he is insulted, dishonored and opposed is, because he is not known. The dying want of the world is a clear, unprejudiced view of Jesus Christ; it would revolutionize the face of society, and transform this sin-cursed world into a paradise of God.

> "If all the world my Jesus knew,
> Then all the world would love him too,"

(2.) *His method.* "He looked." Some looks have reformation and revolution coiled up in them.—"He looked." Think, if you can, of Jesus passing by the seeking sinner and not "looking;" as well might you think of the sun mounting to the meridian without looking upon the dew-flecked flowers on the rolling landscape. Zaccheus was a seeker; so was Jesus. They were looking for each other: and each in his way had shown his earnestness by efforts and sacrifices to find the other. Blessed be God, it does not take the seeking sinner and the seeking Saviour long to find each other; for, how-

ever near the gates of perdition the sinner may be, the first sigh of penitence prompts Jesus "to pass that way," and the first prayer of honest surrender brings him "to the place."

Notice the order and significance of the descriptive words in this verse: "When Jesus came to the place, he *looked* . . . and *saw* . . . and *said*." That is the order of description needed, but, alas, sadly lacking in our churches. We have too many who can look without seeing; they possess so little of the Master's spirit that they can pass along the highways of life, and through orchards of sycamores, and never set eyes on a sinner anxious "to see Jesus." They constantly "see" men inquiring about politics, money, pleasure, and the thousand and one things that agitate society and the world of business; but, alas, they never see one of those anxious, sin-sick souls who are longing "to see Jesus." Sometimes these anxious souls turn our churches into sycamores, and Zaccheus-like climb into the branches of our public services, in the hope that something may be said by the preacher, or on the way home, that some words of comfort or guidance may be spoken by the members. But alas, the preacher may have no word for such, and the members may be so absorbed in talking politics, or criticising the sermon, that they neither

"see" nor sympathize with such burdened spirits.

It is possible, however, to know our duty, and even be in sympathy with it, and yet fail to do it. It is possible both to look and see, and yet not to "*say*." A deep sense of duty may be neutralized or held in abeyance by a want of moral courage. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." There may be a keen apprehension of the necessities of the case,—a strong conviction of what ought to be done, without having the moral courage to do it. Hence, many timid and distrustful persons, may "look," and "see," and yet not "say." One serious defect in our efforts to reach the masses is, that the "saying" is too largely left for the preacher; the vast bulk of the membership neither "look," nor "see," nor "say." Our Christian warfare is carried on largely with the blunderbuss. We fire into the crowd, in the hope that somebody is going to be hit: and the preacher is the only person that uses the gun. But, in a ministry of nearly a quarter of a century, I have not seen any great revival, the fruits of which were lasting, that was not largely the result of an awakened, active membership. Personal dealing with persons is the order of *Christ's kingdom*, and the liking of its subjects too, when their hearts beat in unison with their King. When our churches fall into line, and put on the

whole armor,—when all Christians, in the spirit of the Master, will "look, and see, and say," there will go forth such an evangelizing mission amongst the nations of the earth as has never yet sought the recovery of man.—(*City Temple,* vol. I., p. 77.)

II. That prompt, unquestioning obedience always secures the divine approval and blessing.

(1.) *The Saviour's command.* "Zaccheus, come down." This command was both startling and unexpected. Zaccheus had no thought of being addressed personally by the Saviour, or of being called upon to come down in the presence of the crowd. In coming in vital contact with Jesus Christ, the seeker always finds new, unexpected things happening; and, like Naaman, is soon made to see that God's way is not man's. Happy is the man, under such circumstances, who, like Zaccheus, obeys with promptness and pleasure.

(2.) *The Saviour's perfect knowledge of the seeker.* "Zaccheus, come down." There is something unutterably precious in the fact that God is intimately acquainted with all our names. No person can assume any attitude of service, or self-sacrifice, or supplication before God, without having his very name associated with the act. "Zaccheus, come down." Implying that his character and wants were as well known as his name. Jesus

never mistakes the facts in any case. He never gives too much or too little, by mistake or preference. Many persons turn our sanctuaries into sycamores of observation; but they differ from Zaccheus in this, that Jesus cannot persuade them to "come down." When invited to "come down" to more practical and saving relations with Jesus Christ and his church, they turn the matter aside, and excuse themselves by saying that they have nothing special in the shape of conviction or feeling, but merely a general interest, under the prompting of which they come to the place. "They turn the sanctuary into a mere convenience,—a point of observation,—a vantage ground, without any pledge or purpose of loyalty to Jesus Christ." Notice, by way of contrast:—

(3.) *The prompt obedience of Zaccheus.* "He made haste, and came down." Zaccheus knew how to make haste. He never should have been "chief among publicans, and rich," if he had not learned how to do some things in a hurry. He had just been making haste to get into the "tree," and there is a healthy consistency in the fact that when Jesus called him, and told him to *hurry up*, "he made haste, and came down." Some men would never get over it, if they made haste in religion. They can "run" and "climb," in obeying

the world, the flesh, or the devil; but to "make haste" in obeying Jesus Christ would so muss up their sense of propriety that they would be liable to instant death from congestion of the emotions. But men who can "make haste" in politics and business, and pleasure,—who can "run" and "climb" after the things of time and sense, ought to carry at least something of their push and energy into religion, and they will, if *soundly converted*, and living on terms of *intimacy with God*.

A leader in wickedness, before his conversion, should be a leader in righteousness after his conversion: and he most assuredly will, if he be as loyal to God as he used to be to the devil. I have been strangely impressed, as I have seen persons of more than ordinary intelligence in the church, persons possessing strong individuality of character, and decided views on almost every subject, and who fearlessly advocate their views; but who, upon the subject of religion, appear to have no convictions worth talking about,—nothing to say in its favor, with anything like the zeal or emphasis they would manifest in any other cause. If a man be a lion in everything else and only a mouse in religion, his presence in the church is, to say the least, a questionable blessing, and religion might be the gainer if he had never been born. Zaccheus ap-

pears to have carried his push and earnestness right into his religion. In his zeal "to see Jesus," he made haste to go up, and now, at the command of Jesus, "he made haste, and came down:" and and we are told he did it joyfully." I like a religion that has joy in it from the start,—a religion that enables a man to obey Jesus Christ, and to do it "joyfully." It is a little difficult to say just when Zaccheus was converted; but it occurred somewhere between the time that Jesus said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house," and the hearty assurance given the Saviour, after he came down, that he would be most welcome. The fact that Jesus was about to become his guest surprised and delighted him: and the ring of noble, brotherly sympathy in his voice completely won his confidence; so "he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully." Through this joyful opening up of sympathy and home to the Saviour, Jesus found the pathway to his heart, and instantly Zaccheus became a new creature in Christ Jesus,—a subject of saving grace; and, as to the genuineness of the work, perhaps no living man ever gave more convincing proof.

Those who do not believe in "sudden" conversions will have their hands full to account for the

marvelous change in the life of Zaccheus. Its suddenness was only equaled by its comprehensive thoroughness. The finest specimen of gradual conversion you can recall; if, indeed, you can think of any, will seriously suffer in comparison with this. Think of the self-abnegation and largeness of heart involved in the proposition: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." "I give;" his benevolent contributions were not the result of entreaty or persuasion, they were unsolicited and self-prompted. "I give." We sometimes go to rich men for help in some benevolent enterprise, but we have to plead and beg, and touch even their vanity, it may be, before we can reach their pockets. And if, out of the abundance of any one of them we bore two or three thousand dollars, he is at once gazetted as a most liberal and public spirited man; when God knows, and he knows, that he would not have given a dollar if he could have helped it.

Mark! Zaccheus does not say: "I will give sparingly to the cause of God; in the meantime, I will get and keep all I can while I live; and then, I intend to will 'the half of my goods to the poor,' or to benevolent institutions." That would have been quite a nineteenth century way of doing things, and it is greatly to the discredit of Chris-

tian people that so much of that sort of thing is being done. But that was not the style adopted by Zaccheus. "Behold," he says, "the half of my goods I give to the poor." That is: "In purpose, I am already on that line of action; the process of distribution is practically begun, 'I give.'" When a rich man joins the church, and of his own accord begins to talk liberally and give largely, it is a pretty sure evidence that Almighty God has had him in hand, and that he is soundly converted. "Behold, the half of my goods I give." Zaccheus made up his mind that he would be his own executor; he proposed to have his money laid out to suit himself,—so laid out that it might be a blessing to others, even while he was yet alive, and not horded up for lawyers to fatten upon, or relations to quarrel over, after his death.

The conversion of Zaccheus reached not only his head and his pocket, but it also reached his conscience. No conversion, however loudly proclaimed, will be of any lasting value unless it includes and practically displays a NEW TESTAMENT conscience.

The person who receives Jesus Christ into his heart and home will at once begin to realize, as never before, the eternal distinction between *right* and *wrong*. Things will take on an *oughtness* never

seen or felt before. Jesus Christ loves to come to a wicked man to save him; but he cannot stay with that man, if he still remain in his sins, after professing to be saved. Zaccheus is determined, therefore, however difficult and humiliating the task, to set himself right both before God and man.

So, in addition to giving "half his goods to the poor," he says: "If I have taken anything by false accusation, I restore him four fold." This unsolicited acknowledgment of guilt, and the avowed purpose to make reparation, indicates at once a profound honesty and the makings, by divine grace, of a strong, noble character. The four fold restitution, which he proposed, was an evidence of his guilt, even in his own estimation. It was the restitution a thief had to make, and he and those who heard him understood it. Yet, his profound earnestness forced him to shoulder the disgraceful confession, and the serious outlay it involved.

VIII.

THE GUIDING WORD.

"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying: This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left."—ISAIAH, XXX. 21.

MAN is essentially a traveller. He has not been consulted as to whether he should "walk" or not,—he must "walk." The only question he has to decide is,—which way? As to the how and where of his walk, man has everything to determine; but as to the fact of the walk itself, he has neither option nor choice. In choosing originally, man blundered and lost his way: and so he needs a guide to set and keep him right. God in mercy provides a number of guides, and it is one of these to whom reference is made in the text. "Thine ears shall hear a word," &c. It is not my

intention to give an exegesis of this passage in its relation to the context. I shall simply take it out of its surroundings, and proceed at once to notice the practical truths it suggests. With this object only in view, I notice:—

I. That the sinner's attitude before God is unseemly and dangerous. "A word behind thee."

Now, one peculiar fact about a man who hears a word behind him is, that he has his back to the speaker. He is, for some reason, not in a social or friendly attitude. This illustrates man's moral position before his maker, both by nature and practice.

(1.) The fact is implied, in the context, that the sinner has not only his *back turned* to God, but that he is actually *going away from him.* And that the going away is not an inadvertancy or oversight, but the result of a set purpose. He is going away, and he knows it: and he intends to keep on.

(2.) That he is *self-willed, stubborn,* and *persistent* in his efforts; that he continues his course of separation, in spite of the constant overtures of goodness, and the entreaties of love. He is not content to be anywhere near God, even with his back towards him; it is not enough that his eyes are turned away, he wants to turn his mind away as

well, so that God will not be in all his thoughts. Hence, like the prodigal, he takes his journey into a far country. He journeys away from all the sacred memories and associations of his youth,—from the Bible, from prayer, from pious companions, from religious services, from all associations and influences that could make him a better man. How many such prodigals are to be found in this great city. Men, and alas women, who have turned their backs upon God, and gone into the far country, such a distance that moral Alps and Appenines tower between them and the saving ordinances of the gospel.

II. That God's warnings and overtures are simple and easily understood. "A word behind thee."

"A word,"—mark you! Not a confusing, rapidly uttered discourse,—not a cold, logical or metaphysical disquisition,—not a philosophical discussion, couched in scientific phraseology, but—"A word."

Not a mysterious utterance from the distant hill tops, or an unknown voice speaking from afar, but "A word behind thee." God never makes the blunder of speaking to a person who is too far away to hear him. But how is the sinner to understand this guiding "word," so simple and so

near? Has he the capacity to receive and understand divine overtures and guidance? Yes,—"Thine ears shall hear a word." First the receptive "ear," then the *guiding* "word." God is not unreasonable in his demands; before he calls or commands, man has the God-given capacity to hear and obey. That lazy man in the Gospel with the burried talent lied, and only added one sin to another, when he represented Jesus as "an austere man, reaping where he had not sowed, and gathering where he had not scattered." Before God speaks to man, he not only gives him intelligence, but ears to hear. So that no man deliberately walks away from God without the consciousness that he is doing wrong, and that he has the power to do right, and ought to do it.

III. THAT A KNOWLEDGE OF HIS DUTY IS NOT OPTIONAL WITH THE SINNER. "Thine ears *shall* hear."

You will notice there is no "if," "but," or peradventure here, as to whether he shall hear or not; he *must hear*,—"shall hear." A man's knowledge of his duty is not conditioned by his conduct, as are the blessings of religion. It is as unconditional as God's promise was to Noah never again to drown the world with a flood, no matter how wicked it might become. The sinner may per-

sistently resist all efforts to make him a better man, and obstinately stand aloof from all Gospel and churchly influences; he may yield to his baser impulses; he may throw the reins upon the neck of unhallowed desire, and plunge into the deep mire of sensual degradation. But, however deep you may sink, my brother,—to whatever lengths you may go, you can never get out of hearing of "a word behind thee."

Sometimes that "word behind thee" wakens you out of your guilty stupor, and like children prematurely awakened, you are crabid and cross: and at other times you say, play something, or let us go to the opera, or bring on the wine. I have known many astonishing instances of God's long suffering and patience, in bearing with persistently rebellious sinners, who appeared determined not to be saved. Yet "a word behind them" was audible in all their obstinate resistance and wanderings; nor could they get so far away, or so deep down as not to hear its plaintive, accusing tones. When, finally, in the most unexpected way, and at the most unexpected time, they stopped short, surrendered to God, and were gloriously saved. God never gives any man up until he becomes so wedded to his sins that he indignantly spurns all efforts for his salvation, both human and divine.

IV. THAT GOD'S WARNINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS ARE ADEQUATE AND AMPLE, THEREFORE THE SINNER IS WITHOUT EXCUSE. "This is the way, walk ye in it."

In his teachings, Jesus Christ always presents duties as well as doctrines,—practice as well as principles.

(1.) *Here we have doctrine.*—"This is the way." "The way," mark you! Not one of a number of ways, or an improvement on the old. No; it has neither duplicate nor substitute. "This is the way." Here we have the origin of all true religion. It begins with God. No religion is true or unto salvation unless God originated it, and gave the directions which called it into being. "This is the way." True religion may degenerate and become corrupt; but no false religion can ever eliminate its errors and become pure and true. The difference between a God-given system of religion and one of merely human device must eternally remain infinite and bridgeless. "This is the way." Here we have doctrine; but doctrine is valuable only as it inspires and prompts people to practice. And so:—

(2.) Beside the *doctrinal* we have also the *practical.* "Walk ye in it." Most blessed and inspiring permission this. A divinely revealed pathway,

and divine permission "to walk in it." "Walk ye in it." Whom?—everybody. The worst sinner this side of perdition, if he would but listen, would still find himself within hearing of that blessed guiding "word behind" him. All manner of doubt, discouragement and fear of failure should be flung to the winds or trampled under foot, in the presence of such divine light and guidance as we have here: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

V. THAT THE LIFE OF THE SINNER IS NOT NECESSARILY FIXED AND MONOTONOUS. "When ye turn to the right hand, or to the left."

The tremendous prerogative of free agency leaves it with every man to formulate and determine his own activities. The power to say yes or no to our Maker,—the power to go east when he tells us to go west, is one of the most awful and august functions of human nature. As to whether he is going to *sink* or *soar*,—as to whether he is to rise to the noble dignity of an exalted manhood, or be a blighting mildew on society, and a curse and dishonor to his race, remains with him alone to determine.

Let me say to any evil genius who may be ambitious to plunge into a life of sin and iniquity, but who feels disheartened or disgusted because of the ethical restraints and religious barriers that

surround you,—barriers which cause you to fear that, after all, your life must be insipid and monotonous. There is no cause, my dear sir, for your despondency on that score. If your purposes are fixed for a life of sin, then cheer up and banish all doubt as to the certainty of your success. I know the influences of which you complain, and many of them will be thrown in your way with a view to your own salvation; but again, I say, *cheer* up, don't be discouraged; you can resist and overcome everything of that kind. You can ignore the prayers and entreaties of Christian friends,—you can turn to the "right" or "left" and pass on,—you can trample under foot the wounded body of the bleeding Victim, and keep on your way. Like Baalam, in your pursuit of the wages of unrighteousness,—you may waive the very angels of God out of your pathway, and in spite of every restraining influence you may dash on, and madly plunge into eternal darkness and despair. As to the folly and guilt of such a course, I have neither words nor imagination to describe them; and surely no person will understand me here as recommending any such course. I only wish to say that, if you are bound to live a wicked, Godless life, though it may be short and wretched, you are bound to succeed. Notice the broad sphere open to the sin-

ner, as indicated in the text, and from which he is to select the pathway of his activities.

(1.) *He may go straight ahead.*

This may involve very little that is specially good or bad. Things may go straight ahead because they are in the stream, and have not life enough to go anywhere but where the stream floats them. But that which drifts never goes up stream, but always down. That is the kind of headway that thousands are making; they are in the current, but they never attempt to swim against it. They simply go with the stream of their own environment and promptings. Many of them are truthful and highly respectable citizens. Like Jonah, they may pay their fare, and be morally conscientious in observing the laws of equity and social justice, but treat God as though he had no claims upon them which they are bound to respect. Or if curiosity or a desire for variety should so prompt:

(3.) *He may "turn to the right hand."*

There is such a thing as right-hand sins. "Popular, paying iniquities," which evoke but little human condemnation,—popular paying iniquities, I say, whose very wealth and audacity appear to daze a sleepy Christendom into tolerance, if not sympathy. Prominent among these are our lusty brewers and wealthy liquor merchants. The men

engaged in this traffic are consumers, not producers; they are drones in the great hive of intellectual, moral and social progress. The better they succeed in their business, the more wretchedness and misery they spread through the community, and the more our prisons and penitentiaries swarm with culprits.

Like pestilential vampires they are sucking out the very life blood of the nation; they send misery and sorrow, disgrace and death, through all grades of society. Yet many of these men have not only the audacity to appeal to an outraged public for their votes, to place them in official position, but actually dictate to both our great political parties what measures they must and must not support, on penalty of their destruction. Woe to the country whose politics are manipulated in saloons, by beer-guzzling, wicked men. There is such a thing as right-hand wrong doing,—doing wrong because it pays. There is such a thing as "right-hand" stealing, by which a man through the minifying or inflation of stocks, or making "a corner" in breadstuffs, clears a quarter of a million in a single season, and is only regarded as a shrewd business man. While that poor mother, driven by the cries of her hungry children, to steal a few

vegetables, or a few pounds of meat, is sent to prison for six months.

Woe to the little thieves, in our day and generation. If, after trying his best to get work and live honestly, a poor man is driven to steal something for his children to eat, or a coat to keep him warm, he will be hustled to prison in a culprit's van, and heartlessly thrust into the naked, gloomy cell. But let some rascal *clean out* a bank, or steal eight or ten millions, and if they go through the form of taking him to prison, he will be carried in the finest outfit, and have drawing-room comforts during his stay. Here is a poor homeless urchin, who has taken a few green peaches from the basket of a well-to-do farmer at the market, and thus, it may be, saved somebody with a weaker stomach from the cholera morbus. But he is "sent up" for six months; while the very man who had him arrested had, in the eyes of the Amighty, stolen two hundred dollars from a poor man that very day, by shaving a note which he knew the man was compelled to settle at any cost. It is possible for the sinner to not only leave the monotony of a straight ahead course, and "turn to the right," but he may also:

(3.) "*Turn to the left.*"

There is such a thing as "left-hand" sins, awk-

ward, unseemly, embarrassing. Conduct which, like blight and mildew, smites with final curse the whole summer of the soul,—conduct that destroys reputation, health, character, destiny. The forger, the liar, the thief, the drunkard, the sensualist, all come in here. Everything sacred, noble, manly, valuable, is sacrificed to the absorbing demand of the present.

This kind of left-hand sinning keeps all our courts of justice in full blast the year round. It fills our jails and penitentiaries, our almshouses and hospitals, and sends a great tidal wave of destruction through our great centers of population. It sends men and women out to destroy the purity and peace of society; to waylay life, virtue and family sacredness, and trample under foot everything sacred in human society. Having stated and shown that the sinner's life is not necessarily fixed and monotonous, that he can choose from the broad area before him, and go *straight on*, or turn to the *right* or *left*. I now come to notice the grandest possibility within reach of the sinner:—

(4.) *Right about face.* This grand movement at once brings to an end both his conduct and character as a sinner. Thank God that the worst sinner carries such a glorious possibility: and no change is of any avail until this revolution takes place.

My dear unconverted hearer, whether you go straight ahead or "turn to the right hand or to the left," you are equally on the way to destruction.

There is no other destiny but destruction for the man whose back is turned to his Maker, unless he wheels squarely around to God and duty. The change of purpose and attitude not only transforms the returning sinner, but everything else as well. The voice that used to be behind is now found to be inspiringly, lovingly in front: and its first accents breathe forth the blessed promise:— "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"While God invites, how blest the day,
How sweet the Gospel's charming sound.
Come, sinner, haste, oh, haste away,
While yet a pardoning God is found."

IX.

POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

"This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."—MATT., xiv., 2.

THE name of Herod is unenviably notorious in the New Testament. Palestine was cursed with four rulers who bore that name. Herod the Great, father of the one in the text, was noted for selfishness, cruelty and cunning. It was he to whom the wise men came, and it was he who "sought the young child's life," and who, in order to make sure of it, slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem. It was he of whom the Roman Emperor said: "*Herodis mallem, porcus esse quam filius.*" "I would rather be one of his swine than one of his sons." His son, mentioned in the text, mur-

dered John the Baptist; and his grandson murdered the apostle James, "and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also." His great-grandson, Herod Agrippa, was king of the Jews when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, and is supposed to have died at Rome about the close of the first century. "This text is no part of revelation. It is only the record of an infidel falsehood, and inspiration is concerned with it only in guiding aright the pen of the historian, and giving us assurance that the unbelieving Herod uttered exactly these words. But as an infidel utterance, it commends itself to the serious consideration of all infidels;"* for I know of no utterance of an unbeliever in which so many things are taught and implied. As I look at this princely company and see the agitation and fear that have taken hold upon the king, I am reminded:—

I. That a guilty conscience will not be silenced by wealth or worldly surroundings.

Herod was a wealthy man; he had courtly surroundings and everything to minister to his happiness. He was a man of high birth and exalted station. He had hosts of servants and friends who were impatient to minister to his wants, and troops

* Wadsworth's Sermons, vol. I., p. 53, to which I am indebted for some things in this sermon.

of soldiers who delighted to do his bidding. At his command twenty thousand swords would leap from their scabbards and deal blows of vengeance and death upon the foe who would dare molest their king. But, though surrounded with wealth and all means of enjoyment, Herod was restless and unhappy, and terribly agitated with feelings of insecurity and alarm. When under the flush and exhilaration of wine, and the fascinating spell of the beauty and dancing of Salome, he made a wicked promise, which led him to the murder of John the Baptist: and, although he had been trying to justify the act to himself, yet conscience thundered condemnation upon him for the wicked deed.

In order, it may be, to forget the past, Herod was feasting with his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee, and many wonderful things were told by them of a mysterious person who had recently made his appearance, and was working signs and wonders among the people: healing the sick, and even raising the dead. With growing apprehension and alarm, he stared and listened to the royal guests, as they were telling what they knew and had heard about this strangely gifted being, and the conflicting views of the people as to his character and identity; until,

no longer able to contain his emotions, with pale face, and eyes glaring wildly into vacancy, he muttered, "It is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."

Well, Herod, supposing John has risen, what of it? Why need *you* take on so about it? "Yes, but I beheaded him!" Well, supposing you did; your act was equitable and lawful, was it not? Here is where the pressure was felt by Herod. He had been trying to tell himself all along, "It was right;" but with a voice of thunder, that echoed through his soul, conscience said: "It was wrong." Memory gives conscience an awful power, and will be its inseparable companion throughout eternity. Perhaps over a year had elapsed since John was beheaded, but memory was still busy with the bloody deed. He was alarmed with the fear that John had risen, as he heard of the miracles of Jesus Christ, and that he was clothed with power, not only to vindicate his own righteousness, and expose the base criminality of his (Herod's) conduct, but also to deal out unmitigated vengeance upon him for his bloody deed. Men imagine they can commit iniquity and then have a private funeral, and succeed in burying their sins; but memory has a trumpet voice, and a resurrection power which will summon the awful things from their

graves. It will hold its torch light over the graves of the past, and our burried Johns will start into life, even though nobody can see them but ourselves. I also learn from the text,—

II. THAT A GUILTY CONSCIENCE WILL WORRY ITS POSSESSOR WITH, NOT ONLY REAL, BUT ALSO WITH IMAGINARY TROUBLES.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth." How imaginary and groundless were his fears that John had risen from the dead. A little investigation would have convinced him that this wonderful Jesus of Nazareth was not John the Baptist. But he was so guilty in the matter of John's death that he did not like to inquire, lest his interest in the matter might cause the people to suspect that his conscience was troubling him, or that John might come the more speedily, and scathe him with merited vengeance. Oh, how many, not only real, but also imaginary fears haunt the wicked,—wickedness is self-love in a mistake. How consciously unsafe and wretched it makes its votaries. There are thousands of men and women among us who know what it is to have Herod's torturing musings.

From certain hints and queries in the shape of, "Did you hear what they are saying about you?" "Do you know Mr. B. says he has something to

reveal that will startle the neighborhood; there is a great deal of talk, and they say your name is mixed up with it, too." From such little expressions terrible to a guilty conscience, they are thrown into worriment and alarm, lest some buried John has risen; their fears may be only imaginary, but they are afraid to ask a question, lest their very anxiety should arouse suspicion. How unsafe and wretched must that man be, whose reputation is poised on the still tongue of a companion in guilt, or an accomplice in villainy. There are persons all about us, and moving in good society, who are walking in just such slippery places today. A silent tongue holds them up. My young brother, never jeopardise your reputation by placing it at the mercy of anybody's tongue. Never so place yourself at the mercy of another that he or she can blight or ruin your character by telling what you know to be the truth. I learn also,—

III. That a guilty conscience will torment a man in spite of his avowed unbelief.

Unbelief cannot silence the voice of conscience, nor can the sinner's skeptical notions screen him from its accusing and tremendous power.

Herod was a Sadducee; and, I take it, he was a prominent defender and liberal supporter of the sect to which he belonged. The Sadducees were

the Jewish skeptics; they did not believe in the existence of angels, spirits, heaven, hell, or the resurrection. Listen, then, to this old skeptic, and behold in him a picture of modern ones. He comes out boldly, as the champion of his sect, and stoutly denies the doctrine of spirits and the resurrection. And yet, today we see him startled out of his pretentious confidence by the story of Christ's miracles, and practically confessing the insincerity of his words, while with blanched face and quivering lip he exclaims, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." "Risen!" why Herod, such a word is not in your creed. You don't believe anybody could be "risen!" "Well, perhaps not; but since I heard of this wonderful being, I have been thinking it over, and, creed or no creed, I tell you—"This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."

"Herein is illustrated the usual, perhaps universal, distrust of unbelief in its own tenets; being at best but a system of negations, it affords no ground of confidence. It does not even attempt to disprove the great truths of the *resurrection* and *eternal retribution;* and its denial evidently consists with an apprehension that these doctrines *may be true.*" We see here how a guilty conscience cuts its way through a man's skeptical notions. There is a

great inconsistency between Herod's creed and the confession wrung from his heart by fear. But this is not at all uncommon with men who embrace error because it suits their sins. They adopt a theory that suits their sinful passions and practices, without having any well grounded conviction of its truth, but simply because it suits them; and, as long as there is nothing to test their creed, it answers every purpose; but when judgments come and their fears are aroused, their creed gives way, and there is nothing left but terror and despair.

Herod professed to be a Sadducee; he denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the future life. It suited his wicked ways; but all the time there was no conviction of the truth of his creed, and all the while conscience was whispering a remonstrance, and waiting for a crisis to assert its power and wring from the murderer a confession of his crime and a denial of his creed. Thus it is that the fear of a guilty conscience has often belied the creed of the skeptic. Many an infidel has trembled among the very tombstones on which he had chiseled—"Death is an eternal sleep;"—many a professed atheist has quailed in the storm, or in the silent night, as under the eye of that God whose very existence he had denied.

We see in the case of Herod how an awakened conscience cuts its way through a man's skeptical notions, and what short work it makes with theories that have nothing better to rest upon than simply *nego*, I deny. He ridiculed the doctrine of spirits and the resurrection; but in the whirlwind of his guilty apprehensions he is compelled to overleap the narrow limits of his creed, and admit the truth of both, in the assertion:—"John the Baptist . . . risen from the dead. He despised the idea of hell; and, yet, in his own bosom were burning the fires of remorse and horror, whose flames he could not extinguish, and the agony of whose burning he could not allay. "He thought to silence the voice of God's prophet; but that voice, in the dark chambers of his soul, will awaken echoes for ever. He thought to dismiss from his presence that stern, reproachful face; but he only rendered it omnipresent and immortal. Let him go forth amid life's bustle and absorbing associations,—let him surround himself with silken courtiers, or mailed men of war,—let him retire into the secret places of his palace, and bar the windows and bolt the door, and draw the thick curtains about him. Nevertheless, within his own spirit he carries the avenger. The sinner carries his own brimstone, and is his own tormenter,—his

own hell. A cry, as of a dying man, will fill the air,—a ghastly head upon a charger will rise before him, as if chiseled in adamant,—a bloodless face and glaring eyes will look upon him from curtain and canopy, and his own lips will quiver, and his knees smite together, as a voice like one of God's avenging oracles ever whispers in his affrighted ear: 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead.'"

So, my brother, you may pull up the old landmarks of the faith, and make broad space for revelry and sin,—you may boast that the old dogmas which used to grip your conscience are now laid aside, and that you are at home and at rest in the possession of broader views. But allow me, most affectionately to say, you are under a fearful delusion. Your rest is, at best, only as the whiff of smoke before the awful explosion that shall wreck you, in all the lofty purposes of your being. Not only so, but you carry the elements of misery and unrest in your own bosom, and in spite of all your skeptical notions you often feel them. The very doctrines you turn into sport and ridicule now and again fill you with alarm. I appeal to your conscience, and ask you before God to plead guilty or not guilty to this charge. There is no getting away from the fact, or around it. Memory

will hold its torch light over the past, and conscience *will* lift up its gloomy voice, and imagination *will* fly back from the future, pale with the tidings it brings, no matter what your skeptical notions may be. For all unbelief is of "the leaven of Herod, and he stands before us in the text as a type of his kind. Herod was a very chieftain of practical and speculative unbelief, and yet his earnest disavowal of his own unbelief,—yea, his unbribed testimony to the rationality of the very truths he denied is plainly recorded in the words: "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." This text is a sermon preached, not by an inspired apostle, but by a progressive infidel. So, if you care not to listen to John the Baptist preaching repentance, listen at least to Herod the Tetrarch preaching on the resurrection." The power of a guilty conscience to inflict torment is one of the most appalling possibilities of our nature. See how conscience punishes this kingly culprit. He is haunted by the murdered John the Baptist, and is in constant dread. Terrible images of his crime haunt alike the revelry of the day and the visions of the night. In vain does Herodius seek to lighten and cheer his gloomy spirit. In vain, also, does Salome, the idol of his heart, seek, with her youthful beauty, to charm away the dark

mantling of gloom that shadows his agitated spirit.

> "The austere remembrance of that deed,
> Still hung upon his spirit like a cloud,
> And tinged its world of happy images
> With hues of horror."

But I must not be understood as teaching that conscience is all there is in the punishment of sin. The text does not lead me to deal with the subject of future punishment, but with the subjective punishment of the sinner by his own conscience. The subject of retribution is pertinent and appropriate just now, because it is a matter the world is very widely considering. The whole irreligious world *laughs to scorn* the idea of *any retribution*, and the Christian world is reviewing its old faith and logic, as if fearful lest divine benevolence might be impeached by the doctrine. Of course, I am not thinking to enter on the general argument. But the solemn asseverations of God on this point are so explicit, that even to moot the matter of eternal punishment is to treat the inspiration of the scriptures as an unsettled question. Let me say, however, that the popular objection to the doctrine is altogether a fallacy. The Bible does not teach that men are punished eternally for sins committed in time. Man goes on sinning forever, and

therefore is punished forever. So that, if it be consistent with divine goodness to punish sin at all, it is as manifestly consistent to punish it eternally. But the teaching of the text puts a new aspect of retribution before us, and seems to place it beyond the reach of even infidel objections. For while unbelievers may ridicule the idea of a place of torment called hell, still intelligent, conscientious men are not accustomed to either deny or ignore the laws of their own intellectual and moral nature; this strange power of conscience to make a man miserable in spite of himself and his surroundings.

X.

JONAH'S FLIGHT.

"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying: Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." &c.—JONAH, i., 1-3.

IN the case of Jonah we have a striking instance of divinely located work and responsibility. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah." But there were a great many Jonahs, and might not one shift it off upon another? No; "the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai." God focalizes and fixes responsibility, and there is no possibility of shifting it onto the shoulders of another. Does "the word of the Lord" come to men now, in the matter of locating responsibility and service? Most assuredly it does; but not in the same way as in the old dispensation. The word

of the Lord comes to people now through the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the judgment of the church, as really as it ever came to men of the olden time. Do you ask, "How are we to know that 'the word of the Lord' really comes to us?" Have you a strong, abiding conviction of duty? that is the voice of the Lord to you. Are you fully convinced that a certain course of conduct is right, and that you ought to pursue it? that is the word of the Lord to you, as truly as if he had spoken to you face to face. What more can any man desire than to be fully convinced that his duty lies in a certain direction? One man says, "I have no strong conviction of God's claims upon me, such as I hear some people speak about." That fact, my dear sir, is one of the most alarming features of your case. God mixes religious convictions with our very being, and if you have succeeded in living down yours, you must have offered great and constant violence to your better nature and your sense of right. The way to loose divine impressions is to disrespect them; the way to silence conscience is to ignore its teachings, and persist in a life which it constantly condemns. We are so made that, if true to ourselves, we shall have clear, sharply defined religious convictions; and, in so far as we are faithful in following them, we are in direct

communion with the Spirit of God. I shall confine my attention at present to Jonah's flight, and its practical lessons. Notice:—

I. THAT LIFE HAS ITS GREAT OCCASIONS, AND WOE TO THE MAN WHO FAILS TO SUCCESSFULLY GRAPPLE WITH THEM.—"The word of the Lord came unto Jonah . . . and Jonah rose up to flee."

This was designed to be truly a great occasion, both in the history of Jonah, and also in the history of redeemed humanity. God signally honored Jonah by selecting him as the *first preacher* he had ever sent to the *heathen world.*

Human life does not always remain on the same key. Sometime, somewhere, God arrests the old monotonous tune, and strikes the keynote to a loftier anthem. Everything depends on how we catch the new tone, follow the leader, and master the music. God does not allow any of us to pass off this scene of mortal life without an opportunity of showing our character and attesting our love to him. How possible it is to be unequal to such an opportunity, to let it pass unimproved, and to be doing a little paltry work,—to be mistaking fuss for energy, and an idle industry for that holy consecration which absorbs every power, and ennobles the man by the sublimity of its motives and aims.

There are hours in the lives of most men, compared with which, all after hours are poor and commonplace,—great critical hours, pregnant with the possibilities of manhood and destiny.* To fall below such crises, is a calamity which the future can never repair. The man who thus fails will go halting like Jacob, on his withered thigh, to the grave. It holds good largely in temporal matters as well as spiritual. Most men have a chance or two, and the manner in which they are met will largely decide their financial destiny. Society is full of poor men, both temporally and spiritually, because they did not manfully grapple with the great occasions of life.

In the case of the young, such great occasions are mainly in the future. That is one of the things which clothe youth with such interest and value. Do I hear some young man say, "Yes, those great occasions are before me, and I am going to be ready; I am watching and waiting for them to turn up." My brother, if you are only watching and waiting, you will most assuredly fail. No man ever grappled successfully with life's great occasions, who spent his precious time in waiting for them to turn up.

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* Joseph Parker, in City Temple, to whom I am much indebted.

If you want to be ready for them, take hold of the ordinary duties of life like a man; make yourself a necessity at the shop or office, in the estimation of your employer. If you would be master, learn first the duties of a servant; if you have the ambition to rule, first learn how to obey. He only is getting ready for the gold who is frugal in his outlay of the baser coin. It is a great mistake for a young man to be holding himself in reserve for some great occasion, instead of impressing those about him with his worth, by nobly doing whatever comes first to his hand. Be faithful just where you are nobly discharge the duties which lie within the sphere of today.

> "Work for the good that is nighest,
> Dream not of greatness afar;
> That glory is ever the highest
> That shines upon men as they are."

II. THAT OPPORTUNE CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT OF NECESSITY IMPLY DIVINE APPROVAL.—"He found a ship going to Tarshish."

Here we see that a man may be strangely favored by circumstances, who is in open rebellion against God. Rightly to interpret circumstances is one of the most difficult things in life. And a man who has become loose at the conscience may so interpret them as to embolden and fortify him-

self in a life of sin. Here is a ship just ready to sail, the very thing he was after. Some on board were, perhaps, impatient at the delay; and others wondered what it could be that kept them waiting, as everything appeared to be ready, and it was after the time. Soon a man was seen coming post haste, making evidently for the boat; and, no sooner did he step on board than they were off in a moment. The captain almost said, by his looks, "I thought somebody was coming; I should have been away opposite Mount Carmel by this time, only waiting for you."

How natural, as the boat cleared the harbor, and Jonah sat down to rest his weary frame and wipe the perspiration from his brow, to have said to himself: "I tell you, I was just on the nick of time; how providential! surely it cannot be so very wrong, my going to Tarshish, or God would not permit me to make such fine connections." Whether Jonah was foolish enough to think that he could relieve himself of the guilt of his disobedience, by throwing the blame on the ship, we do not know; but I know there is a good deal of that sort of sentimental nonsense talked and believed in our own day.

There are people who make circumstances into a kind of Bible, and argue that, after all, it is

impossible they can be so very bad, or providence would not thus conspire to further their purposes. "If a man is bent on doing wrong, he will find near at hand ready-made opportunities to facilitate his purpose; ships all rigged and ready to help him to his desired haven." Once a man has made up his mind to pursue a given course, everything round about him begins to take hue and attitude from that determination; and thus he comes to have a kind of sovereignty in the region of details. So that he can turn things, more or less, as he pleases and then say to himself: "Just see how nicely these things work to help me on."

When a man gets himself mixed up with iniquity, it is not much wonder that he tries to set up a kind of supernatural wisdom of his own, as a sort of self-vindication. There is a necessity put upon him to project out of his own imagination, a sort of divine oversight in the sphere of circumstances, in order to allay the misgivings and upbraidings within. It is quite possible for a man to so put circumstances before his own mind as to be fearfully misled by them,—so misled as actually to turn them into a pedestal upon which he may stand, and with greater impunity sin against God.

"Jonah found a ship." If the ship had left before Jonah got to the wharf, and there had been

no other ship going to Tarshish for ten days, Jonah might have acted very differently. Calm reflection might have brought him to his knees, and prayer might have sent him quietly back to his deserted charge. But, you notice, there was no time for thought, much less for prayer, for the boat was just about slipping her cable.

There is a practical lesson here, which, perhaps, as Christian workers, we do not sufficiently recognize; it is this: that it is much more difficult for some persons to stop sinning than others. That much charity should be exercised towards those whose very circumstances invite their further continuance in sin. "Jonah found a ship." You might almost say the ship found Jonah. There he was, and there it was,—the very thing he wanted, and going to the very place, "Tarshish;" and, as the captain beckoned and shouted, "All aboard," what was more natural than for poor Jonah to jump on. There are many persons whose experience is very much like that of Jonah; their very circumstances seem to make a further continuance in sin almost a necessity. There are ships on every hand to take them further and further from the paths of righteousness and peace.

Many a man has had reason to thank God that the ship left before he got to Joppa. That was the

only thing that saved him from disaster, and perhaps destruction. There is many a faithful man in the ministry, nobly "crying against" the iniquity of today; who, when "the word of the Lord" first came to him, started a bee-line for "Tarshish;" but finding no "ship" at "Joppa," and thereby time for solemn self-questioning and prayer, he humbly retraced his steps, and is now manfully working at his post. It may be that none but himself and God know anything about his hasty, disobedient flight, and the change that came over his mind, as he sat at the harbor of some Joppa, with not a "ship" that he had anticipated anywhere to be seen.

III. That a man may ignore the claims of God, and yet be scrupulous in his observance of the laws of social justice and equity.—"Jonah paid the fare."

Oh, how many Jonahs there are who ignore the claims of God, but who pride themselves on *paying their "fare."* Honest with the owner of the ship, but dishonest with the *owner of the universe.* Right in minor points, but wrong in *major* principles. By attention to isolated points of morality, men try to make up what they lack in the sterling completeness of Christian character. They pride themselves on the fact that they never "*steal a ride.*"

They set great value upon honesty, and highly prize the reputation of being men of *integrity*. In those days of over-reaching and fraud, it is refreshing to look into the face of an honest man; and I appreciate and honor him, whether he be a Christian or not.

But still, such men must be made to understand that no man can be a man of integrity, in its true sense, who is not a *Christian*. God has claims upon us as well as man: and any man's integrity is partial and *ruinously defective* that does not honor both claims. "As an integer is a whole in distinction from a fraction, which is only a part; so a man of integrity is a man whose aim in the right is a whole aim, in distinction from a man whose aim is divided, partial, or unstable."

If, in speaking of an absent or departed friend, we are obliged to run out on little spear-like points of his character, and say: "Oh, well, he always paid his debts; he was a kind man in his family, a good neighbor;" you show his weakness rather than his strength. Who, claiming to be a man at all, would not pay his debts, and be kind to his family, and a good neighbor?

See this truant prophet running away from his duty, going west, when God told him to go east; refusing to pay what he justly owed to his Maker,

and yet walking promptly up to the captain's office and buying his ticket, as though he would not do a dishonest thing for the world. His ticket placed him on an equal footing with the best passengers on board, and secured for him the respect and approval of the officers of the boat. To have exposed himself to the displeasure of both God and man would have been too much for Jonah. To be *stealing a ride* to "Tarshish," and at the same time disobeying God, would have turned the "ship" into a place of *torment*,—so, "he paid the fare." If he had refused to pay "the fare" his danger *could not* have been increased; but his *sense of safety* would have been greatly disturbed.

And so, many a man is taking a quite comfortable ride to perdition because he pays his "fare," is liberal to the church, strictly honorable in business, and carries his ticket of public confidence and social honor with him all the time. "He paid the fare." Jonah might have gone to Nineveh for far less than it cost him to go, even part way, to "Tarshish." As a mere matter of economy, it is wiser to serve God than to serve the devil. The most expensive thing in the mart of existence is sin. The devil's taxes on his paultry wares, his premiums on indulged recklessness, temper, lust, are fearfully, ruinously high. How many Jonahs

are paying "the fare" in the precious coin of character, health, manhood, and their immortal souls; to go to some Tarshish of illusive pleasure, whose very gates lead to death and hell.

IV. THAT THE WICKED MAN IS A PUBLIC CALAMITY,—A SOCIAL CURSE.—"The mariners were afraid, . . . and cast forth the wares."

God will teach Jonah, and through him the world, that to go west when he says "go east" is a vital mistake, which, unless repented of, must end in disappointment and destruction. So "the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a great tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." God is demonstrating the fact here that favorable circumstances are one thing, that divine approval is another, and that the former can confer no lasting blessing without the latter.

No matter how much the sinner may have things his own way, or how near he may be to his "*desired haven*," God can head him off, frustrate his purposes, and convert the very elements that were most friendly to his progress into instruments of punishment and death. "The Lord sent out a great wind." Who did? "The Lord." Learn here that storms may sometimes have a moral mission to accomplish. "That divinity may be pursuing some child of many prayers, in prodigal revolt, on

the wings of the wind. The roar of the hurricane may be but the thunder echoes of an angry God over some purposed evil or perpetrated crime."

"The ship was like to be broken." The ship and all on board jeopardized, because of one man! See the laboring ship, the wild commotion, the terror in every face. They feel that, unless relief comes instantly, they must go to the bottom. Behold the costly bales of merchandize thrown into the sea. It was a trading vessel, and its cargo was the property of merchants residing at Tarshish and other parts of Europe. Alas, what trouble, what misery, what disgrace thousands have to endure because of other peoples' conduct. What crises of agony, what blinding storms of sorrow many are compelled to suffer, because of the relation they sustain to some one else. Many worthy families are being constantly brought into disgrace, and are compelled to suffer, both in mind and estate, by the disgraceful conduct of some prodigal child, or a beastly, drunken husband or father, who, like Jonah, may be quite unconcerned, in the midst of the disgrace and turmoil. Yes, the sinner is a public calamity, a social curse. His influence goes far and near; he is a tormentor of society. It is madness for any man to say, "I injure no one but myself." You are injuring everybody. You are

not merely injuring your father or mother, your wife or child, you are causing loss to the universe.

When the terror-stricken sailors confronted Jonah, as to his mission and antecedents, he told the whole truth with a noble frankness, which one cannot help but admire. His revelation only increased their alarm; and when, in their desperation, they appealed to him for his opinion as to what ought to be done; taking in the awfulness of the situation, with a manly heroism, he replied: "Cast me into the sea." Behold, here, the alarming rapidity with which sin can bring the midnight of despair over a man, and so absolutely revolutionize his prospects and consciousness, that he will say, *amen, to his own damnation*,—"Cast me into the sea." Hearing Jonah's honest confession, the hearts of the rough mariners were touched with sympathy, and they determined if possible to save his life. So the noble fellows wheeled on to the oars, and with might and main *pulled for the shore*.

But the elements, as if conscious of their purpose, seemed to madden into greater fury. Then they commenced throwing the cargo overboard; but even that seemed to make matters worse rather than better. To every bale that was thrown overboard the sea appeared to say, "No, no! that will not do." The trouble was they were throwing out

the wrong stuff, and that's what is the matter with men in our own day. Finally, as the last resort, though with great sorrow and reluctance, they seized the hapless prophet and cast him into the angry billows; and scarcely had he left their hands until the wind died away; the sea appeared to say, "It is enough," and immediately there was a great calm.

Learn from this, that there is a right and a wrong way of *settling things*. That great sacrifices of time and substance may be incurred without any profit, and without even touching the seat of our difficulty. You may cast out one bale after another, and become orderly and upright in your deportment, but that will not give you rest or safety. You may throw overboard one bale after another, of profanity, and drunkenness, and lust, until your deportment is lightened up to the buoyancy of the Christian character, but the sea *will not* become calm unto you. We must have a settlement with God on the basis of mediation and righteousness, or the sea will *always be rough*.

That truant heart of yours, my brother, sleeping, Jonah-like, "in the sides of the ship," is the secret of all your trouble. As master of the ship, go down and interrogate it, *stir* it up, *shake* it into wakefulness, if need be, bring it up on deck, and

say: Here, blessed Lord Jesus, is this old enemy of mine and thine. I have come to the point of a separation at last, and here it goes overboard into *thy* hands. "*So shall the sea become calm unto you.*"

Lessons.—(1.) The word of the Lord still comes to men. May we keep an open ear and an attitude of expectancy and obedience.

(2.) When God calls men to go to Nineveh, there is neither success nor safety anywhere else; and to flee to Tarshish is a most terrible mistake, no matter how many ships we may find at Joppa.

(3.) Scrupulous attention to the laws of justice and equity cannot atone for the violation of God's law; for the Lord caused a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken, and Jonah was thrown overboard, ticket and all.

XI.

MINISTERIAL SOLICITUDE.

"Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."—1st. Cor., xvi., 10.

CORINTH was a famous Grecian city. It was located on an isthmus; and its fine situation between two seas commanded the trade both of the east and the west. It was celebrated as a great centre of wealth and commerce; and its magnificent libraries, schools of philosophy and institutions of learning vied even with those of Alexandria. All nationalities and religions were represented at this great center of attraction. Everybody went to Corinth, either to make money or to spend it. Its great riches produced pride, love of

display, effeminacy, and the nameless brood of vices which accompany material prosperity, when God is left out of the question.

The church at Corinth, being composed of both Jews and Gentiles, was specially exposed to error, both in belief and practice. The schools of philosophy were corrupting in their doctrinal tendency; but the church's greatest danger arose from the fearfully corrupt state of society. In the very center of the city stood the celebrated temple of Venus, a description of the obscenities of whose worship would not be tolerated by any Christian congregation. There a thousand priestesses of the goddess carried on their work of defilement and prostitution, under the auspices and patronage of religion.

Such a state of things would naturally breed low, lax views as to the sacredness of the family, the restrictions of the marriage vow, and would seriously minify the standard of ethical thinking. Paul saw the great danger of the church, and not only admonished and warned them in his epistles, but was always anxious to send Apollos or some whole-hearted brother to give them a helping-hand at Corinth. He had by some means informed them that he was making arrangements to send Timothy to labor for a time amongst them. And, in order to smoothe his way to their confidence, and secure

their good-will and co-operation, he makes use of the language of the text. Notice:—

I. THAT ALL HUMAN PLANS AND PURPOSES ARE FRAUGHT WITH CONTINGENCY.—"If Timotheus come."

Yes; but, you say, could not this inspired and highly honored man have taken matters into his own hands, sufficiently to have enabled him to make positive plans and engagements, in founding and building up the kingdom of God? No! even Paul could neither promise nor plan without using the little but potent word "if." It is impious presumption to measure and stake off the future with one's plans and purposes, with absolutely no regard to the contingencies of life.

I know not with what potentialities the word "if" may be clothed in heaven, or whether in that blessed country they ever use words which express only the probable or contingent. It is a comforting thought, that the Christian's connection with the contingent and disappointing will be confined to this probationary state. The contingencies of life were an important factor in human history in the days of the apostle, as well as now. If Paul had said, when "Timotheus comes," instead of "if Timotheus comes," he would have been using the language of assurance, in a matter fraught with

palpable contingency. Many things might occur to break his arrangement:—

(1.) The Macedonian cry of some more *needy church* might be heard. New doors were constantly opening; fresh emergencies might arise; embarrassing complications in some of the newly organized societies, demanding immediate attention and judicious handling, might arise.

(2.) *Fiery persecutions* hounded those holy men wherever they went. Bigoted priests, vindictive Pharisees, and caviling scribes pursued the early heralds of the cross, more as beasts of prey would pursue their victim, than like human beings. Bonds and imprisonment were common experiences in apostolic times.

(3.) Escaping all these, he might be smitten down by the *pestilence* that walketh in darkness. His exposure to daily perils, both by sea and land, might soon terminate his useful life. So Paul was wise, you see, when he used the subjunctive rather than the indicative or imperative mood, and said, "If Timotheus come."

So, in regard to this church. You have chosen and expect your Timotheus.* The choice you have made reflects credit both upon your intelligence and piety. He is in every way qualified to take

* Farewell Sermon, preached at Albany, N Y., April 11, 187

the pastoral oversight of your large membership, and to fill your pulpit with unusual efficiency. But I beg of you not to get the erroneous impression that he is the *only one* in the Conference that *can* God has a great many Timothys who can make things go almost anywhere. The future success of your growing church is to you a matter of praise-worthy solicitude.

The noble church edifice which, by the blessing of God, has been erected during the past three years, is a monument to your zeal, liberality and perseverance. It is located in the most delightful part of the city, where the flowers in your magnificent park, during the summer months, like a benediction from heaven, float their fragrance upon the congregation through your open windows. The imposing appearance of the edifice itself, its fine acoustic properties, its magnificent organ, and its complete adaptation for all religious purposes are not surpassed by any church in the city. With these new elements of attraction and added facilities for usefulness, your present position is both unique and interesting.

You ought to be on the eve of a new departure, just entering upon a career of soul-saving and noble work for God, away beyond anything you ever attempted or accomplished before. If during the

past three years, with only the meager accommodations of the Sunday-school room, and largely occupied with the turmoil of building, the membership has been more than doubled; surely, now, with everything so fully in hand, and with your greatly augmented force of workers, you should be looking for and actually enjoying a degree of prosperity unapproached in your past history.

Your history, for many a year, will be shaped very considerably by your coming pastor. First impressions in regard to churches, as well as to individuals, are tenacious and not easily forgotten. Strangers coming to a church may get an impression, favorable or otherwise, through contact with the pastor, which will secure their sympathy or repel them ever afterwards. You want a man in this pulpit who will not only draw the people by his preaching, but who, by his genial, sympathetic intercourse with them, on the street and at their homes, will turn the thoughts and hearts of the community towards this church, in feelings of sympathy and words of commendation. Your anxiety that no blunder should be made is legitimate and praiseworthy. Do not become desperate, however, and take everything into your own hands. Remember that the cause in which you are so

deeply interested is the cause of God. The men are also God's ministers.

He knows each man, and the wants of every church better than his people can know them. He ought, therefore, not to be ignored or fenced off altogether. in the matter of locating them. He knows more about the wants of his church, and where to put his men, than any of our official men or church committees. This used to be one of the cardinal doctrines in the creed of Methodism, in the days of our fathers; and I question if there was nearly as much trouble and dissatisfaction in the church on this subject then as there is now.

Do not narrow yourselves down to one man, and so get the impression that it must be *that one* or a *failure*, perhaps a *protest*. Circumstances may make it impracticable to give you the man of your choice. New vacancies may occur; fresh complications may arise; in the estimation of the bishop, other churches may have stronger claims than you. An accident may befall him; disease or death may lay him away in silence. So, having done your part, it is your privilege to leave the whole matter with God, and borrow no trouble, even though you can only say, "If Timotheus come."

II. THAT A CONTENTED, PEACEFUL MIND IS ESSENTIAL TO MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY AND SUCCESS.—"With you without fear."

The apostle imitates his divine Master here, and uses his own great influence to smooth and clear the pathway of this young man to success. Paul was an itinerant preacher; he well knew the value of *first impressions*, and therefore was anxious to have Timothy start off well on his *new charge*.

Nothing detracts from a minister's usefulness so seriously as to be timid and fearful as he enters upon his work. The man who is not "without fear" is never *half* himself, and will be sure to make a comparative failure. *He lets rooms* to, or rather helplessly *admits*, an enemy that ties him hand and foot,—makes him unnatural, and renders all his doings weak and comparatively worthless. A minister who is not "without fear" among his people is in a place of torment. Fear goes with him into his study, and under its gloomy shadow he prepares his sermons; it goes with him into the pulpit, and into the homes of his people, crippling his usefulness, giving him no peace of mind, and never allowing him to appear at his best. This foe to ministerial success may take body and form from a variety of apprehensions.

(1.) It may arise from a suspicion that he may not be able to meet the *expectations* of the people. That his pulpit, pastoral and social qualities are not equal to the intelligence and importance of the church.

(2.) He may have doubts as to his ability to *fill the place* of his predecessor, and as to whether the contrast may not be greatly to his disadvantage. A secret suspicion that he is not much thought of by some, and not welcome by many, may follow him like his shadow. Oh, how many queries and doubts disturb and worry us sometimes, as we enter upon a new field of labor, many of them groundless and imaginary, it may be, but terribly real and hard to bear, for all that. Men who are not over-stocked with self-esteem, and prone to look on the dark side of things, suffer great distress of mind, and pass many a joyless hour in the cold grip of such feelings.

Every man who is a "shepherd, and not an hireling" will naturally have a fear or timidity in taking charge of a church so prominent and important as this. You have the power to perpetuate or remove this feeling. Our people have the power to swing us out into the tropics, or create a winter about us, and, oh, how cold it feels.

III. THAT THE CHURCH HAS AN IMPORTANT DUTY TO PERFORM IN THE MATTER OF MINISTERIAL HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS.—"See that he may be with you without fear."

That is, *make it your business.* Take pains to clear his mind of all doubt as to your co-operation and sympathy. Some churches are culpably reticent in this matter. No matter how well their pastor preaches, or how hard he works, he gets no word of encouragement or appreciation. I have known church members to take special pains to grasp the hand of a stranger, and in the hearing of their pastor thank him for a sermon not to be compared with those of their own pastor, but for which a word of appreciation was never uttered by them. Some men are very gallant and kind to other men's wives, who are rude and unkind to their own; and I think we have something analogous to this in our churches.

Many members and officials are more considerate and kind to other peoples' pastors than they are to their own. Brethren, this is all wrong. "Now if Timotheus come," and you are pleased and profited by his preaching, do have the candor to let him know it. "See that he be with you without fear" on that point. It will be the great-

est desire of his heart to please and profit; be sure to let him know, if he succeed.

Banish the unworthy suspicion that such information might make him proud and egotistic. If he be a man of God, it will make him a better and more useful preacher; if not, your blunder will not be in your kind, appreciative words, but in your selection. I heartily despise the man who is always fishing for compliments. I love to see his bait untouched, and his net empty; nor do I think much of the blind, untempered praise of some; but a few words of intelligent commendation are an inspiration to an honest man. You will not suffer, I presume, by comparison with others in this matter; but as a church, official members and all, you have yet plenty of room for improvement.

(1.) "Now if Timotheus come, see that" you do not, by *needlessly* eulogizing your former pastor, produce in his mind the fear that he will never be able to *fill* "the aching void." In the earlier years of my ministry, I was greatly exercised and worried on more charges than one; for, wherever I went, the high praises of my predecessor were sounded in my ears. I worried, not because I was envious or jealous; but the cold fact was before me that my peoples' hearts were captured and carried off by another; and the thought bore down

upon me with a leaden pressure: "They don't care for me; I fear they never will, and that I shall be a failure." Oh, if they only knew how my timid, youthful heart sank, in the presence of their eulogies, surely they would have chosen another subject.

When a man buries the faithful partner of his youth, it is seemly and proper for him to often speak of her superior qualities and exalted character; but once he marries again, it would be only the dictate of common sense and refined feeling to discriminate a little, at least in his own home. It would be outrageously unfair to his second wife to have him always praising his first, and telling how she used to do things.

I am inclined to think that his second wife would soon get weary of such injudicious and ungentlemanly conduct, and lament it may be that he had not been buried beside his first wife the day before she had the misfortune to make his acquaintance.

(2.) "Now if Timotheus come," see that you do not, by *needlessly unkind* criticism, and *fault-finding* references to your former pastors, produce in him the "fear" that he is among an unkind, fault-finding people; and that, possibly in a few months,

they may be equally bitter against himself. I am always pleased to hear my predecessor highly spoken of; but no minister should be made an object of worship; nor will he, but by the uncultivated and thoughtless. The church that loves one man can always love another, and will if he be equally worthy. I find, also, that a church which has been unkind, and acted in an unchristian spirit towards one minister, will be likely to do the same to another, if the least provocation be given.

Do not be in too great a hurry to *weigh* "Timotheus, if he come;" give him a chance. When you do weigh him, put him on a *decent scale*, and not on an arrangement like a butcher's steelyards, that weighs everything on a sharp hook. See that he is without fear, when you put him on the scales; if *fear* go on with him, *he will not register half his weight or worth.*

IV. That God's faithful ministers are all men of one work.—"He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."

He, in his way; I, in mine. He, with his points of strength and weakness; I, with mine. Points where I have been weak he may be strong, and the reverse. Sanctified individuality is the great want of the times. No man is an atom that God has

made superfluously, and does not want to build his kingdom with. We are not thrown into this world at random and with no definite object to accomplish. Every man has his mission,—his work; and, sanctified to God and duty, he can do a work which no other being on earth can do as well. We should be ourselves, and adopt the style and instruments most natural to us. Better wield the simple sling of David than the cumbersome armor of Goliath.

One of the practical benefits of the itinerancy is the constant circulation among the churches of men of such diversity of talent. One man is a powerful preacher, but not much of a pastor; another is an excellent pastor, but nothing extra in the pulpit. Another has fine executive ability, but does not excel in any other department. One man has great influence over the young people; and another is specially gifted in strengthening and establishing the souls of believers. One man is a great power in the Sunday school, but weak in the pulpit; another is a fine preacher, but not of much account in the Sunday school.

By the constant circulation of this diversified talent, the church has not only the advantage of variety, but its various interests in this way are

more thoroughly provided for. No man looks after all the interests of the church with equal efficiency and thoroughness; and no two men are made exactly alike. "Now if Timotheus come," I know myself and him well enough to say, that some interests of this church, which I have not been very efficient in advancing, will at once feel the inspiration of his presence. Chief among these interests is the Sunday school, in which he is a practical and unusually efficient worker. "See," therefore, "that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."

XII.

GOD'S FIREMEN.

"Pulling them out of the fire."—JUDE, i., 23.

BY this text we are reminded that there are points of resemblance between sin and fire. The writer has before his mind, not a common fire, such as that employed for domestic or culinary purposes,—not a harmless fire, in range or furnace, for utility and comfort; but a dangerous, spreading conflagration, which demands immediate attention, and which makes the energy and action implied in the text both seemly and appropriate. "Pulling them out of the fire." It shall be my business, during the coming thirty or forty minutes, to bring before you some of the most suggestive points of resemblance between *sin* and *fire*.

I. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS MYSTERIOUS. —Fire is one of the most familiar and yet one of the most unknown and mysterious things with which we come in contact. What is fire?—of what are is consuming properties composed? What weight, shape or size is it? No man can answer these questions. Yet, with all the mystery, we have such palpable evidence that there is such a thing as fire, that no sane man would dare to deny it, since over against the mystery is the undeniable fact of experience and consciousness that such a thing as fire does exist. So, sin is a mystery. What is it?—whence came it? Recently, I read an account of a great fire, and the article closed with these words: "The origin of the fire is unknown." Suspicions were entertained, suppositions were made and conjectures were offered; but, yet a deep mystery hung over the affair, which may never be solved. The same may be said in regard to the origin of sin. How came it into existence, in a world made and governed by a Being of almighty power and love?

We know it must have had a beginning, for God only is from everlasting. We know it had a beginning before Eve and Adam felt its power, since they were tempted. We know it began with him who is called Satan and the father of lies; but

still, there are mysteries about the origin of evil which no human intelligence can solve; difficulties which, perhaps, the mind of an archangel could not explain. Yet, no man, properly under the sway of reason, can allow the mystery to cause him to ignore or deny the fact of sin. What though there be mysteries as to the when, where and how of sin's origin and existence? Since over against this mystery is the testimony of our consciousness that we have both seen and felt it ourselves We have seen its destructive work; we have been appalled, as we stood amid the desolations and ruin it has wrought in society, and alas, what is worse than all, every man has felt its scorching, destructive power in his own heart.

II. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT EXISTS IN A TWO-FOLD STATE,—LATENT AND ACTIVE.

Fire, in its *active* state, renders our homes habitable in winter, illuminates our cities by night, flames out in the sweeping conflagration, drives our factories and railways, flashes into the lightning, and thunders in the earthquake. Fire, in its *latent* state, exists in every material object about us. "It is in the dust beneath our feet, and in the air we breathe; it is in the sea, and in the sky, and even in the solid ice upon our rivers."

So, sin exists in an *active* and *latent* state. In

its active state, it flames out in Sabbath desecration, profanity and reckless living. It spreads over the whole face of the political and social world, in the present condition of the liquor traffic, in which tens of thousands of men, many of them with no more conscience than a locomotive, are protected by law, in their demon-like work of pauperizing and degrading their fellowmen. It blazes up before the public, in the destruction of individual character; it flashes out in deeply laid schemes of political corruption, and in gigantic plans of commercial dishonesty. The destructive work of sin is as visible in the life and character of the inhabitants of this city as the work of fire is, here and there, upon its property.

Sin, in its latent state, is strikingly symbolized by latent fire. It slumbers in the heart of universal humanity; it exists in "every man that cometh into the world." The virtue of some people is nothing more than vice sleeping; all it wants is contact with some tempting circumstance to awake it into vigor and destructive action. As savages light their fire by rubbing pieces of wood together, so men stir up the latent fire of depravity by mutual contact. There is sufficient latent fire around us to burn up the globe; and there is sufficient latent sin in human nature to turn this world into

a hell; and, apart from the grace of God, all that is required, in any case, is a few strokes of the steel of a rightly adjusted temptation, and the sparks would ignite the tinder of the sensibilities, and the whole man would be ablaze.

Latent sin, in the heart of a child, is somewhat like latent fire in nature. At first, it does no particular damage, and scarcely indicates its presence. Through the friction of temper, the whispers of self-love, and the gusts of provocation, however, it soon begins its destructive work, though the seriousness of its doings may not be even suspected. Thus it is that sin begins its withering, debilitating business in the human heart. Like latent fire in a forest, it soon begins to destroy the roots and fibers of the moral nature; and, like fire in a forest, leaving the trees and saplings of character, and the under-brush of principle to topple over in tangled embarrassment in each other's arms. This is the secret of those sudden falls and failures which so frequently amaze and startle society.

Some person's character, without note or warning, comes tumbling down to the ground, and the whole neighborhood echoes with the fall. Dazed, and almost breathless, the people say: "Who ever thought of such a thing, especially of him, of her, and how sudden!" Not so sudden, my brother, if

you could only trace processes. No man walking the path of duty, in the full honors of conscious uprightness, ever fell prostrate in an hour. Sin must do considerable *latent burning* first, in the shape of secret inclination and unholy desire. There are persons all about us, the very fibers and roots of whose character are all charred and wasted by this latent fire of sin, and they are ready to topple over into disgrace and ruin, as soon as a gale of temptation comes in the right direction.

III. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE OF ITS POWER TO ATTRACT.

How a child loves to toy with fire! how oblivious to the possible consequences. What multitudes are attracted by a conflagration; what haste they make, and what dangers they run. So, there is a marvelous power in sin to lure and fascinate, especially to the young, to decoy them from the path of innocence and purity, into the fiery pathways of sin and death. Every effort is made by Satan and his agents to make sin as attractive as possible. Oh how attractive and bewitching sin is made to appear in our great cities; and with what success Satan hides his cloven foot, until the unwary victims are brought under his degrading power.

Look at the palatial drinking and gambling houses, and places of even darker repute; how at-

tractive, pleasant and princely everything is made to appear: flowers festoon the windows and adorn the very steps that lead to death and hell. Everything that heart could wish is provided. There is wit to amuse, beauty to attract, music to please, drink for the thirsty, and revelry and debauchery for the reckless. Thousands of our young men are attracted to such places, and before they have time to well consider what is going on, they are all ablaze with the fire of unholy passion, and with the wings of their purity and manhood scorched and disabled, many of them soon find themselves helplessly and alas hopelessly floundering in the poluting mire of their own appetites and passions.

I have heard of a singular tree, that forcibly illustrates the deceitfulness of sin; it is called the Judas tree. The blossoms appear before the leaves, and they are of brilliant crimson; the flaming beauty of the flowers attracts innumerable insects, and the wandering bee is drawn to it to gather honey; but every bee that alights on the blossoms imbibes a fatal opiate, and drops dead to the earth. Beneath this enticing tree, the earth is strewn with the victims of its fatal fascinations. That fatal shrub, which attracts only to destroy, is a vivid emblem of the fascination and deceitfulness of sin.

I rejoice to be able to say, on divine authority,

that no victim of sin need give up in despair. For Jesus Christ is able to put out the fire of sin and cure us, however awfully we may have been burned. He is also able to antidote the most deadly poison the sinner may have imbibed among sin's beguiling and fascinating flowers. So, my brother, whether sin has burned or poisoned you, Jesus is able and willing to save.

IV. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS REMORSELESSLY INDIFFERENT AS TO WHAT IT DESTROYS.

The most splendid mansions, the most costly furniture, the most valuable paintings, the rarest gems of art, all, all are consumed as ruthlessly as the meager contents of the beggar's hovel.

So with sin. The man of broadest nature and noblest parts is the most tempting mark for Satan. The man of genius and benevolent sympathies,—the man who is blessed with the gift of magnetism and eloquence, who can so project himself upon listening thousands as to hold them spell-bound by the witchery of his thoughts; such a man is as rudely scorched and ruined by sin as the most rude and worthless creature that walks the streets. Who can calculate the amount of property that has been destroyed by fire in Philadelphia during the last hundred years? But the destruction which

sin has caused during that time is *infinitely greater* and more disastrous.

No conflagration is so disastrous and dreadful as the *burning down of a man!* Acres of burning warehouses, a whole city ablaze, Chicago in ashes is not such a calamity. I have seen such a conflagration, and so have you. I have seen the poor wretch weep and groan under the periodical consciousness of the awful destiny before him. I have watched the progress of the fire, and seen self-control give way, and self-respect give way, and regard for the good opinion of others give way, and love of wife and children give way, and hope, the longest and strongest rafter in the structure give way, and the whole man collapse,—a heap of ghastly, smouldering ruins; a disgrace to his family, and a curse to the community where he lived.

V. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT TURNS EVERYTHING INTO ITS OWN ESSENCE.

Not only will fire turn ordinary fuel into fire, but also princely mansions, the most costly furniture and apparel; the most precious gems and diamonds, when brought in contact with fire, are at once transformed into its own nature. There is hardly any object in nature, even the hardest granite, that fire cannot turn into fire.

So it is with sin. Its uniform tendency is to

make everything like itself, over which it gains control,—that is, a *curse*. Beauty of face and complexion, gracefulness of form and attractiveness of manner, brilliancy of thought and elegance of expression,— in a word, all the most winsome, ennobling and God-like characteristics of our nature are turned into a curse to ourselves and those about us, when scorched and inflamed by the fire of sin. Sin turns heaven's choicest blessings into so many curses and calamities. When Archimedes, in order to wreak vengeance upon the Romans, brought down the genial rays of the sun, by his magic glass, and burned up their ships, he only dramatized the universal fact that sin ever strives to turn the greatest blessings of God into the greatest curse.

VI. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT CAN BE RESISTED AND PUT OUT, AND MUST BE, OR IT WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING WITHIN ITS REACH.

The tendency of fire is to spread and burn on, so that things which seemed far off and safe are soon brought within the sweep of its influence. No man can prescribe limits to a conflagration. It is provokingly indifferent to the wishes even of the men whose property it is consuming. It makes progress according to its own laws, and not according to the wishes of those who are looking on.

You cannot set fire to the forest and accomplish the desire of burning down just one acre. So, no man can kindle the fire of sin, in the forest of his appetites and passions, and forecast correctly the extent of the burning. It will be likely to rage and devastate far and near, in spite of his efforts to stop it, and his wish that it had never been started.

Sin is like fire, then, because it must be resisted and put out, or it will destroy everything combustible within its reach. Fire, properly resisted, can be put out. For this we have our fire companies, whose sole business it is to be on the alert and ready to combat fire, in its destructive work. Engines, hose, ladders, and other appliances are always kept in perfect order: and, at the sound of the gong, great energy and effort are used, as they dash forth to fight the flames.

So, thank God, the fire of sin can be put out, and God has his firemen to do it. The different branches of the church are his fire companies; they are all equally well provided for by the Chief Captain of the department. The engine (Bible) used by each company was built by the same hands, and in the same shop. The power (the Holy Ghost) that propels the quenching element through the hose of human instrumentality is the

same in each company. The length of hose, hook and ladder appliances, are equally ample and complete in all.

But, alas, how foolish and humiliating has been the conduct of God's firemen in the past. No Christian can read the record of their past disgraceful doings without feeling ashamed and humiliated. Instead of dashing into their work, as men of God, and "Pulling them out of the fire," some of the companies entered into long debates, as to *how* the fire could have originated, and *when*, and *where*. Others argued, pro and con., that persons in whom the fire of sin had once been quenched could never be set on fire again,—"once in grace, always in grace." Sometimes the vindictive spirit and scathing words of disputants indicated the presence of the very fire they were discussing, and the need of mutually applying the hose upon themselves. Others, again, at great length, argued that a hose of a given size, or a certain volume of water, must in all cases be used, in order to accomplish the result: and, that the water must not be applied to the person, but that the person being rescued must be put into the water.

All this time, one or two companies have been moving about on the scene, and with insulted look and lordly bearing, they protest against the

presence and pretentions of all the other fire companies. They would let any number of souls perish, rather than stand upon the same platform and give a helping hand to any other of God's firemen, no matter how grandly they might be "Pulling them out of the fire." With a look of disgust and injured dignity, they say: "Out of the way, ye fanatical, presumptions intruders. We are the only company chartered and properly credentialed to do this work; God has given us exclusive authority over this entire business."

Growing out of such blasphemous presumption, long discussions were carried on. But, in the meantime, with the devil laughing in his sleeve, the fire of sin was burning on unmolested, and whole blocks and avenues of immortal souls have gone down in the conflagration. Oh, how humiliating it is to read the record of the past doings of God's firemen. May we learn a lesson from them for our future guidance; and, regardless of all minor points and side issues, may we devote our every power to the great work of saving souls: "Pulling them out of the fire."

XIII.

PETER'S FALL: ITS LESSONS.*

"But Peter followed him afar off."—MATT., xxvi., 58.

IN the manner in which the events of our Saviour's arrest are recorded, we have a striking instance of what may be called the considerate, sympathetic silence of the Holy Ghost. Both Matthew, Mark and Luke omit the names of Peter and Malchus,—the smiter and the smitten.

Why this omission? They were both living, no doubt, when these gospels were written, and it may be that Malchus, as well as Peter, became an active worker in the Master's cause. The Holy Ghost, therefore, would not unnecessarily humil-

* The substance of this and the following Sermon was delivered before the Philadelphia Preacher's Meeting, May 10, 1886.

iate or embarrass these men, by associating their names with all their disgraceful doings on that dreadful night. But John, writing at the close of the century, gives their names, because, long before that, they had finished their record and gone to their rest.

There may be follies, blunders, sins in the past lives of some of the most pious and useful men, which it would not be wisdom for them to confess, and with which they could not, without great damage, associate their names. No man can afford to tell all he knows about himself, especially all that is belittleing and humiliating; and, I learn from the silence of this narrative, that the Holy Ghost never prompts a man to tell all he knows that is bad about his neighbor. In speaking of others, there are times when it would not only be unkind, but actually unpardonable to mention names. To unnecessarily associate a person's name with a sin or weakness of the past, especially if never repeated and long ago repented of and forgiven, is both contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The subject to which I call your attention is *Peter's fall.* In the following discourse I shall dwell upon the philosophy of Peter's fall. I shall present what I

have to say, at present, by dealing with the following question:—

I. WHO FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF? "PETER."

(1.) *Then seniority and leadership in the church are no guarantee against falling into sin.*

In the order of choice, Peter was the oldest of the apostles. He was also their recognized leader. His fall was, therefore, all the more damaging and disastrous. For a timid, distrustful one to fall back and waver, would not perhaps be much to be wondered at; but for the courageous, intrepid leader to desert his post was something for which nobody was prepared.

Peter is the last man that should have "followed afar off," both because of seniority and leadership, and the blighting influence that would naturally and inevitably result from his conduct. When I read, "Peter followed him afar off," I am not at all surprised when I also read, "Then they all forsook him, and fled." Under the circumstances, they did just what might be expected. Finding themselves deserted by their leader, and Jesus in the hands of the mob, I am bold to say, that the most natural thing they could have done was just what they did.

The power of leadership involves tremendous responsibility. Rightly used, the man who wields

it becomes a royal diadem in the hand of God; but, if perverted to wickedness, his power to damage the cause of God, and scatter the disciples of Jesus Christ is fearful to contemplate. Peter fell, though the oldest and most prominent member in the church. The fatal tendency to sin is still in human nature: and there is no official position, however sacred, and no time of life however advanced, that can screen us from that awful tendency. Angels sinned in heaven, Adam sinned in Paradise, and Peter sinned, though constantly busy with sacred things, and in daily companionship with Jesus Christ. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

"PETER FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF."

(2.) *Then, a man may backslide while blessed with the most faithful and efficient gospel teaching.*

"The best of men are but men at best;" and no man is so well equipt for preaching the gospel that he could not be improved. No living man is "thoroughly furnished." Human wants are multifarious, many-sided, and the gospel is divinely adapted to meet those wants. But who among us does not feel his inability to understand the individual needs of all who wait on our ministry, and to give to each his "portion of meat in due season."

The tendency, perhaps, of the majority of us is to remain narrow and defective, in the scope and contents of our teaching. To give undue prominence to some doctrine, or some few phases of gospel truth, to the neglect of others equally if not more important. I have known some earnest, good men, whose entire teachings clustered around some doctrine, or theory, or dogma, about which the best of men could never agree. All their teachings were only so many kaleidescopic rearrangements of their thoughts upon their pet theme. That under such preaching many should go back into the world is not to be wondered at. The wonder is that any could endure it and live.

But every true minister, though not chargeable with such narrowness, has mourned over the fact that so many go back to the world who embraced religion under their ministry. And many a discouraged brother has been greatly exercised in spirit as to whether the cause of these declensions might not be his own inability or unfaithfulness in "rightly dividing the word of truth." In giving them milk when they needed meat, or meat when they needed milk. In failing to apprehend the spiritual wants of the people, and meet them with the ample provisions of the gospel.

The most faithful have ample ground for mis-

giving and scrupulous querying upon this very point. Perhaps there are few ministers who have not at times, at least, shaped their teachings more with a view to the culture of their audience, or their own popularity, than to the spiritual wants of those to whom they ministered,—presented what was most popular, rather than what was most needed. It is to be feared that much damage will accrue to the church, in certain quarters, from a style of preaching which is becoming quite popular just now. It may be called a sort of religio-scientific way of putting things. It deals largely with objections, many of which the audience may have never heard before. History, astronomy and poetry enter largely into the discourse. But the seeking sinner may look in vain for Jesus Christ in the sermon, and perish in the hell he sought to shun, before he could get one saving glimpse of the bleeding Victim. Such preaching is neither milk nor meat, but a sort of highly flavored blanc-mange, upon which the average working Christian would starve to death. Yet, we must not suppose that the only thing our people need to keep them from backsliding is proper gospel teaching. Peter's experience shows that a man may sin shamefully while blessed with the most perfect gospel teaching.

"PETER FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF."

(3.) *Then a man may backslide while blessed with the most affectionate pastoral care.*

Jesus Christ was peerless, both as a preacher and pastor. Peter was one of his favorites; though he was imprudent, impulsive, and had very much to learn. None of the disciples were so trying to the Master as he, and to none did he speak in such varied tones and sentiments. He was restless, imprudent, thoughtless, inquisitive, prying into other people's business, giving his advice without being asked, and taking even Jesus himself to task on the verge of his great atoning work. The most scathing as well as the most eulogistic expressions that ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ were spoken to Peter.

He saw the jewel underneath the rough exterior, and knew how it would shine when polished by divine grace, in the friction of its own filings. His great heart's purpose was to make him "a man thoroughly furnished unto all good works." He foresaw his dangers; told him of the enemy's purpose; warned him of this very fall, and in the true pastoral spirit bore him to God in prayer: "I have prayed for thee." Surely no man was ever blessed with such pastoral solicitude and fidelity, and yet, *in spite of it all, Peter fell.*

Every minister who "is a *shepherd*, and not an *hireling*," has been troubled, as he has witnessed this and that declension; this one and the other making shipwreck of faith. And, as every man, who is not an intolerable egotist, struggles at a painfully conscious distance from his ideal, in every department of his vocation; who has not felt condemned, as he has thought of the slight pastoral attention that some of these very persons had received, and worried under the impression that perhaps greater pastoral fidelity might have saved many of them to the church. I care not to possess that minister's spirit who has never been exercised by misgivings and musings such as these.

But still we are not to imagine that all our people require to keep them from backsliding is faithful preaching and conscientious pastoral care. It is not, by a long way, my purpose to excuse or foster pastoral infidelity; but, for the comfort of those suffering unduly under self-criticism and condemnation, I am glad to emphasize the teaching so manifestly on the surface of this text, that a man may backslide while blessed with the most perfect gospel teaching, and with the most affectionate pastoral care, even with incarnate Deity as his *preacher* and *pastor*.

"PETER FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF."

(4.) *Then high professions of loyalty and love are not always to be relied upon.*

Peter had just been telling Jesus how he was going to stand by him, even though the rest should forsake him. But no sooner did the crisis come, than he showed himself to be as weak and wayward as they. I have learned to look with suspicion upon any member of the church who boasts of his superior fidelity and attainments, and takes on and becomes exercised and troubled about the spiritual condition of others, whose lives may be much more spotless and consistent than his own. Peter's assurances partook somewhat of the nature of boasting. Great natures never burden you with vows and assurances. They are the product and sign of a weak, unreliable character. Peter soon found out, however, that it is one thing to make vows, in the heavenly atmosphere of the upper room, but quite another thing to pay those vows, amid the provocation of Gethsemane, and the excitement of the judgment hall.

Many a boastful disciple has found out, as well as Peter, that it is one thing to be prominent in a religious meeting, but quite another thing to honor Christ when the torches of the enemy are in dan-

gerous proximity, and the shouts of the rabble rend the air. If professions and promises were the conditions of greatness, some in our churches would be giants. If the fullness of virtue lay in the resolve, and not in the execution, many would make their mark in the religious world.

We have too many in our churches who, like Peter, are fine fellows in the upper-room meeting, and in declaring their own fidelity; but who cannot be relied upon when life's searching provocations arise. I have heard of a little boat that carried such an immense whistle that it took all the steam to blow it; so, whenever it whistled it stopped running.

Too many in our churches are like that little boat; the whistle of their profession is too big for their supply of steam. It takes all their energy to blow it, to tell of their attainments, and what wonders they are going to do. To see a number of these crafts steaming about camp-meeting harbor, or revival inlet, and listen to the blowing, you would think, especially if you never heard it before, that the dawn of the millennium had come.

XIV.

PETER'S FALL: ITS PHILOSOPHY.

"But Peter followed him afar off."—MATT., xxvi., 58.

THEN, how do you account for his previous conduct? He had not only vowed loyalty to Jesus, even unto death; but when the rabble came and was closing in upon the Master, he showed that he meant just what he had said, by proposing and using physical resistance.

Up to the time that "Jesus forbade him," and healed the ear of Malchus, we have not the slightest ground to suspect that Peter was not profoundly honest in all he said and did, and that it was not his purpose to venture life and limb, sooner than the Master should be taken. How, then, are we to reconcile his heroic conduct up to the time that

Jesus "forbade him," with his conduct immediately afterwards? I shall attempt this reconciliation, as I now proceed to answer the following question.

I. WHY DID "PETER FOLLOW HIM AFAR OFF."

In my answer, I shall be obliged to part company with commentators in general, so far as I have examined them. I am sorry for this, for I have received untold benefit from the works of these noble men; and, for an ordinary mortal to advance a view contrary to their construction of a passage may seem egotistic, if not audacious.

We are, however, creatures of imitation, and one commentator largely adopts the views of another, without further investigation; and hence the fact that a number of expositors hold the same view of a passage is no guarantee that it is the correct one, or that it cost each that amount of original investigation, which their aggregate numbers would seem to imply. This text, I am inclined to think, is one of these passages. There is a striking sameness in expositors, which indicates that nearly everything has been taken for granted. But, as a child, by its artless utterances and queries, may suggest a new phase of a subject, which even his father never saw before, so a person of only ordinary ability may happen to bring out a new mean-

ing in a text, which those immensely his superiors may never have happened to see.

WHY, THEN, DID "PETER FOLLOW HIM AFAR OFF?"

My answer is, WOUNDED PRIDE. He felt *hurt, rebuked,* harshly dealt with. He felt that his well meant, unselfish efforts had not been properly *appreciated.* Nothing will make a man act so utterly unlike himself as a *good dose* of this very feeling. Nothing tries men of Peter's temperament so severely as to be *publicly rebuked,*—to have their self-sacrificing efforts not only not appreciated, but unfavorably criticised and condemned.

This is so, especially in the *earlier part* of their Christian career, when they have more *zeal* than *prudence,* more *push* than *piety,* and the Pentecostal fire has *not yet come down,* And the more we love the person who wounds us, the more painful and intolerable the wound becomes. This view of the subject naturally and satisfactorily accounts for Peter's strange conduct, and no other view that I ever heard of does. Expositors tell us that Peter's conduct arose from—

(1.) *Unbelief.* But what ground have we for asserting that the promises and pledges Peter had just been making were not the promptings of faith? He was the first man that drew blood when

the rabble came, which shows that he had not forgotten his promises, and was ready to make them good. What had occurred, then, to destroy his faith so suddenly?

If Jesus had shown signs of weakness and fear, as the rabble hove in sight, Peter might have begun to doubt and waver; but he was perfectly calm and self-possessed; and the moral majesty of his character was so commanding and awful that it flung visible terror into the mob, under the influence of which, at the sound of his voice, "they reeled backward and fell to the ground." How could Peter have lost his faith in the presence of such displays of power and majesty? Another theory is, that "Peter followed him afar off" from—

(2.) *Fear.* Fear of what? Of being arrested for wounding Malchus. We must bear in mind, that Jesus instantly and completely repaired the damage done. And, if he was afraid of being arrested, the wonder is, not that he followed so "far off," but that he "followed" *so near.* Why follow at all, and especially why follow into the court room, where the officers, the rabble, and the very man he wounded were all assembled? Surely no man in his senses could be guilty of a piece of insanity like this. I am positive that a careful study of the subject will convince any candid mind that

the theories of unbelief, fear, presumption, &c., fail to satisfactorily account for much of Peter's conduct. The theory that he felt himself *slighted, hurt, unkindly dealt with*, relieves the case at every point, and throws new light upon what must otherwise remain dark and inexplicable. It accounts for the sudden change in his conduct, why he so quickly assumed an attitude of indifference, and fell into the rear. We can also see why he went to the scene of the trial, and why, although the door-keeper admitted him through the *personal influence* of John, that he *did not remain with John*, but took a back seat, the most natural thing imaginable for an injured, badly used man to do.

This way of looking at the subject lifts Peter out of the remote past, and shows him to be quite a modern man. In fact, Peter is not dead yet. He is to be found in a great many of our churches,—he lives on. The individual person dies; but the genus, the injured, the unappreciated, badly used man *never dies*. What pastor has not seen and pitied him, and tried to lure him to the front. What pastor has not, unintentionally, wounded some of these thin-skinned Peters: and the first sign he saw of the mischief was, that he "followed him afar off." How many pastors have been at their *wit's end* to heal the mischief done by some

well-meaning, impulsive Peter, with his official, or rather, *officious* sword.

Persons are to be found in many of our churches who years ago were active and prominent workers, but somebody spoke adversely of their doings, called in question their wisdom or motives, and all of a sudden they fell into the rear. From workers they became watchers; they said to themselves: "We don't intend to do anything out of the way; but, if they appreciate us no more than that, we will just take a *back seat* for awhile, and see how *things will go then*;" and underneath and behind this is the *expectation*, and indeed the *wish*, that things may go *very badly*.

I learn from this narrative, that the most disastrous consequences may grow out of an act in regard to which divine guidance has been sought. When the rabble closed in for the arrest, Peter said, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" If he had waited a moment, Jesus would have told him. But, impulsive and furious, he thought he *read in his own feelings* the mind of Jesus, and so he drew his sword and struck into the crowd, and cut off a man's ear. I wonder it was not his head, and it should have been, if Jesus had told him to strike. There is all the difference in the world between *self-prompted* and *God-directed* activity.

There are thousands of Peters in this matter of seeking divine guidance. Many of our own blunders, and much of what has been unpleasant in our own experience as members of the church, did not arise from the fact that we had grown skeptical or prayerless; but, that, after asking divine guidance, we did not expect or wait for it, but, Peter-like, followed our own promptings. We struck with the wrong instrument, at the wrong time, or in the wrong spirit, and wrought mischief which had to be patched up and healed, but the scars of which may yet be visible.

People ask God's guidance and interposition in the destruction of their spiritual enemies, and, instead of trusting God, and *believing them to death*, they whip out their own little sword and strike at some old prejudice or lust, as though they were going to make *short work* with the *old man;* but self-prompted blows *never kill him*, they only *exasperate* and *madden*,—only cut off an ear, draw blood on the *extremities*, but never touch the vitals. Mortal blows in the spiritual sphere are always God-directed. No doubt many of our church quarrels and troubles grow out of the same cause.

The manner in which many Christians smite with their tongues is so much out of harmony with their prayers, that no person can mistake the fact

that they act from their own promptings, and not from the divine. Wide-spread mischief is often done in this way, and wounds are sometimes made which even God himself cannot heal. Some well-meaning man dashes into a scheme, cuts off the ear of some plan or enterprise, at the wrong time, or in the wrong way, and the church has to put it on again; to publicly undo what he did, and this at once becomes a ground of coolness and trouble.

This was exactly the case with Peter; he had been doing a little work with his sword on *his own* responsibility. Jesus said: "Put up thy sword;" and turned and publicly undid what he had done, "Healed the ear of Malchus." Peter was *thunder-struck, dazed.* He said to himself: "This is *unkind, unbearable, not what I deserve.*" Every time he turned it over it appeared the more annoying and dreadful. So he not only "put up his sword," but he unbuckled it and threw it away; for, in the hall, it was not his sword, but his speech that betrayed him. Now, let us follow Peter, and learn a lesson about the terrible danger of harboring a feeling such as that which resulted in so disgraceful a fall.

"PETER FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF," and came finally to the scene of the trial, the while brooding

over his grievance, and in no mood to bear any pressure in regard to his relation to Jesus Christ. Soon a Jewish maid charged him with being a disciple of Jesus; but he promptly denied it. Another and another charged him with being a disciple of the Nazarine, to which he replied with oaths and curses, that he did not even know the man.

I am inclined to think that Peter was in the habit of swearing before he was converted. Men generally, when they begin to deny Christ, strike right into their old way of talking and acting, and not unfrequently go to greater lengths than ever before. What a fall He not only cursed and swore, but he pointed to the Saviour, and *cursed* him, declaring that he did *not know or want to know him.* It was these awful words, boisterous and loudly spoken, that caused the Saviour to turn round and *fix his eyes* on Peter. No wonder that look caused him to see what he had done, and that "he went out and wept bitterly." Poor Peter had no idea of where he was going to land when he first began to nurse his wounded feelings.

So, there are many persons who are without God and without hope in the world, who years ago were active and useful members of the church; but they fell behind because of some slight or

criticism. It was not their intention to do anything wrong, but to let the church know that they felt it, and let them find out how poorly they could get along without them. But such men are the best kind of *tinder* for the devil's match-box, and he knows just how to set them ablaze. The pert little maids of provocation came tripping along just when they were least prepared to meet them, and, Peter-like, the Master was denied before they could well realize what was taking place.

(1.) In taking leave of this subject, let me say, guard against any feeling that would cause you to "follow him afar off,"—that would cause you to feel at home, while consciously at a distance from Jesus Christ.

(2.) Guard against the feeling which was the secret of Peter's shameful fall. If you are acting the part of a gentleman and a Christian, let nothing that any person may say or do, cause you to act in any other way. You have duties which you owe to God and your fellows; let no slight or want of appreciation turn you aside from discharging them. Your responsibility lies in the manner in which you deal with those duties, not in the manner in which other people deal with you. Do not be too thin-skinned. Cultivate dimness of vision,

in seeing slights and insults. Remember that more than half the slights, about which people worry and chafe, are mere creatures of the imagination. And some of the slights and lack of appreciation that are real are no doubt caused by things that are objectionable in ourselves. If we are now and again told to put up our sword, and find that what we do is unfavorably criticised, we may be almost sure there is something in us which, in the eyes of others, justifies their want of appreciation.

Jesus could have explained to Peter the ground of his disapproval, if he had had an opportunity, and no doubt others could many times to us. So, no man is doing himself or the man who injures him justice who dwells constantly on the injury he has received. He should impartially scrutinize his methods and motives, and see if, after all, there is not something in himself that caused the criticism. When others rebuke or fail to appreciate us, it is always wise to check our rising indignation, and examine ourselves, to see if we are not more or less to blame.

Whatever criticism or allegation may be made against us, let us not allow it to drive us out of the path of duty, especially if we know it to be false. As ministers of the gospel, we know well what it

is to be slighted, and to have our most unselfish actions provokingly criticised. Happy are we, if under such provocations, we have grace not to harbor the feeling of wounded pride; but, by gentleness of spirit, and noble devotion to duty, we produce the impression upon those around us that we are devout, Christly men, worthy of better treatment.

Happy is every man who, when he feels himself wronged, can imitate the noble example of John Callender, of revolutionary fame. He was captain of a company of artillery, and at the battle of Bunker Hill he was charged with cowardice, tried by court martial, his company taken from him, and he publicly branded with disgrace. Conscious of his innocence, what did he do? Did he sulk, scold, curse, or rebel? No! he took his place as a private in the company he had previously commanded.

There, without a murmur, he faithfully did his duty for over a year. But at the battle of Long Island, his true worth compelled recognition.—There, amidst the iron hail of death, as the smoke lifted for a moment, stood John Callender, loading and firing; his comrades all fallen or fled. A score of British bayonets were pointed at him,

and he commanded to surrender; but he will die first; so he fired away. A British officer, struck with his noble heroism, made him an honorable prisoner of war. He was exchanged, and General Washington publicly reversed the Bunker Hill sentence of cowardice, and restored John Callender to his former position in the army.

XV.

ACHAN'S SIN:

Its Growth and Consequences.

"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver," &c.—JOSHUA, vii., 21, 26.

ACHAN was suddenly and powerfully tempted. Temptation implies some good in a man; how or why tempt him else? The man who has become a monster of iniquity, and wallows in the polluting mire of his own appetites and passions, has put himself below the reach of temptation. He has touched bottom already, and there are not much greater depths, till he takes his fatal plunge into that pit that has no bottom, and for which dreadful leap he is daily acquiring an attitude and a swing. The tendency of sin is thus to debase

and brutalize human nature; and all it requires is foothold and time to bring about its fearful results.

My theme is, the *Growth and Consequences of Sin.*

I. THE FASCINATION.—"I saw . . . . a goodly Babylonish garment," &c.

Though the noblest of the five senses, yet very much of human sin has its origin in the *eye.* The lust of the eye is one of the most deadly foes of the Christian. It is, perhaps, the most misleading and dangerous of the triumvirate,—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Eve's trouble was all *in her eye,* at the beginning. She said: "When I *saw* the tree." Yes, when she "saw the tree" her fancy, aided by the suggestions and lies of Satan, clothed it with strange attractiveness and irresistible charms. Hear her tell how she was carried away by it, it was:—

(1.) *Invigorating,*—"Good for food." (2.) *Attractive,*—"Pleasant to the eyes." (3.) *Instructive,*—"To make one wise." In his first approaches, Satan always comes under the guise of some fascinating pleasure, advantage, or profit. It is not until he gains interior possession of his victim that he stamps his iron hoof, shakes terror from his wiry locks, and lashes every faculty of soul and body to do his accursed bidding.

It is worth while to notice how uniformly sin is made to appear in the same fascinating, winsome light. Achan's sin was very much like Eve's, though 2500 hundred years rolled between them. She "*saw* the *tree*," and *fell;* and "he *saw* the *spoil*," and *fell;* the sin in each case rooting and sprouting in the eye. For the moment, the "*garment* and *gold* took on strange fascinations for Achan. Hear him: (1.) *Desirable*,—"Goodly." (2.) *Imposing*,—"Babylonish garment." (3) *Precious*,—"Gold." (4.) *Variety*,—"Silver and gold." (5.) *Abundance*,—"Two hundred and fifty shekels." Alas, how their luster tarnished and their value diminished once the deed was done. How like fire to his guilty conscience, when inquest was made for blood! How gladly he would have flung them back among the ruins, if he could. To sin is bad enough, to bury it is worse; every moment it is buried multiplies the obstacles in the way of reformation, and at any moment a point may be reached where the sinner can "find no place of repentance, though he seek it carefully with tears."

II. THE FEELING,—"I coveted."

A wanton, roving eye gives sin a foothold in the feelings. When sin fires the lust of the eye, it soon excites the emotions, and stimulates the lust of the flesh. Achan was now a thief in feel-

ing,—"I coveted." What multitudes of sinners of that class are to be found:—revenge, theft, adultery, murder, *carried on in the feelings.* This is the secret of the sudden falls and failures in society. The smouldering fire of sin in the feelings, like latent fire in a forest, chars and consumes the roots of integrity and principle, until a gale of temptation, from the right quarter, will astonish the neighborhood with the crashing fall of a character never even suspected of wrong, in any way.

Achan must have had a weakness for at least looking at questionable and unlawful things before this trouble. We know that his not remote ancestry had marred the luster of the family name by serious moral delinquency; and we know not but that he carried some hereditary damage or weakness, which, though hidden in the deep channels and laws of influence, may have helped him to this fatal fall. Most assuredly he had not been at all times an honest, pure man, in thought and feeling, up to the time he saw this tempting spoil. Woe to the man who cannot confront a bad impulse with the solid masonry of a good character. Unless we thus fence ourselves off from evil, our downfall will be only a matter of time.

Only character, evolved from the principles of truth and righteousness, can withstand the seduc-

tive influences of the world, and the attacks of the powers of darkness. The influence of home and friends is all that keeps many people straight and respectable. Like cooper's casks, they are held upright and in shape by the hoops of external influences that surround them. Woe to the man whose restraints are all on the outside. The internal, more than the external, should suggest our conduct, and shape our activities. It is the Japanese, I think, who say that a snake is quite orderly and straight, so long as you keep it in a bamboo stick, but the moment it gets out it begins to wriggle and act snaky, So, there are many who are quite decorous and respectable while in the bamboo of home influences, who show the old serpent, and act snaky enough when such restraints are taken away.

III. THE FELONY,—"I took;"

This is the final step in the fatal gradation:—(1.) The *look*,—"I saw." (2.) The *lust*,—"I coveted," (3.) The *larceny*,—"I took." From the *eye* to the *feelings*, and from the feelings to the *fingers*. Lust, if allowed to conceive, *must* bring forth sin, it can't help it. A bud *must blossom*, if not broken off or blighted,—"I took." Until that fatal point is reached, there is at least a chance for repentance.

But, does some one ask, was not Achan's guilt complete when he "coveted?" No; nor do I be-

lieve guilt is complete even when the guilty act is resolved upon. To will and to do are not synonymous terms in morals or anywhere else. I know that the unwrought purposes of the heart take on virtue and vice, according to their kind. But, is virtue complete when a virtuous act is resolved upon? Of course not. The fullness of virtue is not in the resolve, but in the execution. The same law governs both virtue and vice. Here, then, we have the germ and evolution of sin.

(1.) Unlawful things voluntarily tampered with, —"I saw."

(2.) Unlawful desire deliberately entertained,— "I coveted."

(3.) Unlawful desire fed and satisfied, I took."

IV. THE FEAR,—"I hid them."

Sin is like an ill-loaded gun, it recoils at the breach, and kills at the muzzle. Things must be "hid,"—must have a grave dug, and, yet, they cannot remain buried. The very nature of things seems to summon sin from its hiding place, and force the sinner to acknowledge, "I have sinned."

I confess to a feeling of sympathy for Achan, as I read his humble, straightforward confession. He owned up; told the whole truth, blamed nobody but himself, and made restitution. "He had not lost the genius of remorse. The power to loathe

one's self is a priceless boon, it shows timber for sainthood. To do wrong, without regret, is an alarming premonition of damnation. We are lost when our moral sense is gone. This hardening of the heart is, in the moral world, what softening of the brain means in the intellectual. In the one it means idiocy, in the other moral insensibility or destruction. Surely that is a calamitous storm that washes the captain's compass overboard.

My conception of the devil is, *personality, minus conscience,*— personality, with conscience worn out. A great *unconscienced intellect,* under the sway of a moral nature, thoroughly unholy. Achan had by no means reached such a pass. He acknowledged his guilt, and gave signs of sorrow and penitence, and penitence is heaven's latch-key."—[C. H. Parkhurst.]

V. THE FATE.—Israel "stoned him."

Notice, here, the rapid evolution of sin, and its equally rapid punishment. "I saw;" "I coveted;" "I took;" "I hid them." "Israel stoned him." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Prompt repentance and reformation would have saved Achan from his fearful doom. Every day makes it harder for the sinner to undo his wrong. The terrible defeat at Ai, the slaughtered comrades, the decimated host, the tears and agony of Joshua,

all made it harder for him to own his guilt and make an honest confession.

Application: (1.) Learn from the context how one Achan can demoralize the whole army of God's Israel. How one tale-bearer or slanderer may disturb and demoralize a whole church. How one vile scandal-monger may trouble and exasperate a Christian community until, in its desperation, it resembles a lion maddened by the poison of a serpent, that finds a lodgment in its mane, while with its poisonous fangs it goads the noble creature to madness.

(2.) That sin, under any circumstances, is a deadly foe; kill it, or it will kill you.

(3.) That the wages of sin are always grievous and disappointing. When Achan had taken the garment and gold, how soon their glory and glitter disappeared; how like fire they burned in his conscience and in his home. "They loose their own, who grasp more than their own." They are like the eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, but brought with it a coal of fire which burned up her nest and her young.

(4.) That if overcome by sin, repentance and restitution are the first and only thing in order. The most possible good, and the least possible evil can be secured by promptly undoing the wrong.

(5.) That repentance may come too late. Achan was too late with his. If he had penitently thrown the "garment and gold" back among the ruins, right away after taking them, God would have smiled in forgiveness, and all would have been well.

(6.) That, however hard and humiliating, the sinner must confess and father his sin. "I have sinned." If not always in this world, certainly in the world to come. Guard against sin in its incipient stages, if you would shun the power of its guilt, and the horror of its consequences. If you want no oaks, plant no acorns.

XVI.

GIDEON'S THREE HUNDRED.

"The three hundred men that lapped."—JUDGES, vii., 7.

GIDEON'S victory may be justly regarded as one of the military marvels of antiquity. He was a man of great sagacity and courage. Cautious and hesitating, in assuming responsibility and facing danger; but, when once convinced of duty, he was fearless and bold as a lion.

"THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED."

I. *Then, little things make great differences in life.*

It was a little thing that made the difference between "the three hundred" and the rest of the army,—"Lapped." But little things represent great equivalents. We are not half so much in

danger of failing in what are called the great things of life as we are in the little things. Little things test and reveal character.

It is by faithfulness in little things that men climb out of obscurity into greatness and honor. And it is through unfaithfulness in little things that the great bulk of humanity both mar their present and minify their future. We are not to suppose that all Gideon's men were cowards, but "the three hundred men that lapped." But they *were lacking* in faith, and in that unselfish and heroic spirit which alone fit men for some phases of divinely ordained service.

"THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED."

II. *Then quality in human instrumentality is of more importance than quantity.*

We are taught here that success in God's cause does not depend upon numbers. The victory is already potentially ours, when we use the right means, in the right spirit. The great want of the church is not more members, but more of the *right stamp*. If our churches could rid themselves of their dead lumber, in the shape of worthless membership, it would be an inspiration and a blessing. Not ten per cent. of the rank and file of our church members would answer the roll-call, or could be

depended upon, when the bugle sounds for battle. Some ministers could hardly pray for a revival with much fervency, if they knew it would only throw another batch of useless members upon them like those they already have to put up with. The only soldiers that amount to anything in God's service are volunteers; men who enlist, put on the armor, obey orders, and delight in the service.

"THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED."

III. *Then, the few may stand firm, and do noble service, in spite of the bad example of the many.*

In our admiration of Gideon, there is danger that we forget the heroic "three hundred" who so nobly stood by him. With the same privilege of deserting him as the rest; think of the faith and fortitude that held them to their post, in spite of the demoralizing example of such an overwhelming majority of their fellow-soldiers.

I stand in admiration and amazement before these heroic men, as I see practically the whole army deserting the cause, and leaving them to face one hundred and fifty thousand men. The illustrious "six hundred" who essayed the fatal ride "into the jaws of death," and the fame of whose gallantry and courage so justly encircles the world, could hardly have been more severely tested than

Gideon's "three hundred," when they saw the general stampede for home, and heard the bugle call to prepare for battle.

Only heroes of the highest type could have survived the shock of such an appalling depletion of numbers. Gideon's men were all volunteeers. They were in the army of their own accord; they had come to stay, and no matter what others might do, they were determined to stand by the old flag.

That is the kind of men we need in our churches, but of which we are sadly deficient just now. We are over-loaded with a motley host, who are good for nothing, only on parade days, or in sham battles, or to find fault with others who are busy trying to rout the foe. It is not enough to march with imposing mein to the front, like the thirty-two thousand; we need men who will stick to their post, like the noble three hundred, when danger thickens,— when the missiles of death are flying, and the shouts of the enemy rend the air.

"THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED."

IV. *Then God is worthy of our trust and hearty co-operation in selecting his agents and carrying on his work.*

Divine wisdom was afterwards seen in the selection of these men. The deserted Midianitish camp,

with all its wealth and attractions, could not tempt them, for a moment, to stay their hand. They were oblivious to hunger, and thirst, and weariness, lest they should loose vantage ground, in pursuing and smiting the foe. Only their invincible heroism, and determination to follow up the surprise, could have gained such a glorious victory.

So it must be in God's spiritual army, in our conflict with self and sin. Evil habits, unholy practices, false principles, must all be pursued, tracked to their hiding places, and remorselessly slain with the edge of the sword. It is harder to live Christianity than to be converted to it,—harder work to follow out, into the practice of every day life, the great doctrines and principles of righteousness, than to understand them, or even teach them intellectually to others.

In fighting under the banner of the cross, faith, and a noble obliviousness to self and the attractions of the world, are the secret of power and victory. The great trouble with thousands of professing Christians is, not that they absolutely refuse to go out to fight the Midianites, but that they are so much under the dominion of the flesh; they are tempted and drawn aside from the contest by the spoil or attractions of the enemy's camp. My brother, you will loose in an hour all

the vantage ground you may have gained in a lifetime, if you allow yourself to be drawn into the enemy's camp, unless it be to strike the foe with more deadly force than you could compass at longer range.

"THE THREE HUNDRED MEN THAT LAPPED."

V. *Then, is it God's fixed plan to work through the few, rather than the many?*

No; it is God's plan, all things being equal, to work, not through a part, but through all his people, whether few or many. Why, then, did he reduce Gideon's army from thirty-two thousand to three hundred men? Happily we are not in the dark as to the cause; God himself tells us why he did it. He had to do so, in order that his power might be recognized in the victory. He saw that this fine army bulked so largely in its own eyes, and in the eyes of Israel, that the glory of the victory would be ascribed to man, and not to God.

Pride and unbelief were slumbering in Gideon's army, and also in his countrymen, and I am not sure that Gideon himself was not tarred, more or less, with the same stick. So, "the Lord said unto Gideon, the people are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath

saved me." What a lamentable moral condition. God was obliged to reduce the army to a mere handful, in order to keep them from becoming materialists, and actually ruling him out of their reckoning.

Is there anything analogous to this in modern times? Yes, verily: this scattering and minifying of the resources of God's ancient people holds a calcium light over much that is analogous in the Christian life of today. We are a match for his ancient people, in our materialistic tendencies, and in our ability to figure God out of our reckoning. Oh, how obtuse we are, in recognizing the hand of God in our daily blessings and deliverances. How prone we are to at least surmise that, possibly, "mine own hand hath saved me."

Alas, what blighting of hopes,—what mysterious scattering of resources men are called upon to endure, in order to bring them to a recognition of God, and a belief in his providential guidance and care. In consequence of this, how often, when facing our foes, God is compelled to look on and see us toying with fire-crackers, when he would have us hurling thunderbolts. How often he is obliged to send his people out, like Gideon's three hundred, in a sort of disguise, and in little poverty-stricken platoons, tinkering with their little "lamps,

pitchers, and trumpets," when he would have them an invincible host, "Bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

The common method of treating this subject, is to eulogize Gideon and "the three hundred men that lapped;" to say nothing in particular against anybody, not even the men who went home, and to present the whole as an illustration of the fact that God would about as soon work with the few as with the many, and that he perhaps rather enjoys taking advantage of the unfaithfulness of his people, in order to show what wonders he can do without them.

But such an idea is contrary to the analogy of nature and the expressed will of God. It breeds false, erronious views of the claims of God, and ruinous conceptions of human duty. If the Israelites and the army had been what they ought to have been, devout and pious, instead of diminishing his men, God might have ordered Gideon to have more than quadrupled their number.

While Gideon's victory was very creditable to God's patience, it does not perhaps reflect much credit upon anybody else concerned, for we see nothing in the narrative to assure us that even Gideon and his men were not more or less given to self-confidence and unbelief. It may be they had

more *fight* than *faith*, more *pluck* than *piety*, and thus helped to put themselves in their present plight. Be that as it may, if they and the people had been quick to recognize God, he would never have told Gideon, on the eve of battle, that the army was too large, and that all who were "fearful," and would rather go home, were at perfect liberty to do so.

The fact that twenty-two thousand took advantage of the permission is not at all surprising; nor does it prove that his army was unusually lacking in bravery and courage. It by no means follows that all the men who have been fearful on the eve of battle were cowards. Many a man has fought nobly, in the thickest of the fight, and come out of the battle covered with glory, who quailed and trembled, with unutterable dread, before the first volley was fired. If victory would not have so inflated their pride and unbelief as to have caused them to take all the glory to themselves, God would have given every man of them a whack at the Midianites, and Gideon would not have been compelled, with three hundred men, to face an army of one hundred and fifty thousand.

It was no enviable position to place men at such fearful odds, even in a righteous cause, and if the darkness of night had not kept them in

ignorance of Gideon's actual resources, nothing short of an interposition from God could have kept the Midianites from wiping them out of existence before sunrise. God gave Gideon and his three hundred the victory, but he saw they could do nothing with the Midianites in daylight, so he sent them out with their "lamps, pitchers and trumpets," by night, to mislead, demoralize, and thus defeat their foe.

I have only words of praise and admiration for Gideon and his noble "three hundred." All I have to say is, that it is a shame the other fellows were not with them. God does the very best with us and for us that he can. If we are morally in such a condition that he cannot use us without injury to ourselves or his cause, he will leave us in our tents, and push the battle with the tested few.

That is about the best he can do with most of our churches. Churches with five or six hundred members leave their spiritual and financial battles to be fought by a mere handful of faithful men and women, about in proportion to Gideon's three hundred, as compared with the original army. Oh, what multitudes of Christian people remain at their homes when the bugle call of special effort summons God's people to the front. How often the anxious minister, with his faithful few have

been worried, and at their wits' end, as they saw the hosts of spiritual Midianites encamped against them, and the majority of the membership too indifferent to give a helping hand.

In consequence of this, God's people have been resorting to considerable "lamp and pitcher" business of one kind or another, in order, at least, to hold the fort, and if possible to gain some vantage ground over the foe. Evangelists, sensational themes, popular methods of preaching are called into requisition,—sociables, fairs, festivals, and other questionable methods are resorted to.

Now, all these devices grow out of consciously impoverished resources, and inability to grapple with the demands of the present. But, if God's people are loyal to him, and all rally around their ministerial Gideons, they need no "lamp or pitcher" business to add to their efficiency, for no encampment of the enemy this side the gates of hell shall be able to withstand their victorious march.

XVII.

THE WONDERFUL NAME.

"His name shall be called wonderful."—ISAIAH, ix., 6.

WE live in a world of wonders. The "wonderful" in mind, mechanism, and matter confronts us at every turn. We need not be surprised, therefore, if the great agent which God has provided to grapple with and destroy sin, the great governmental disaster of the world, should be clothed with mystery and majesty, and that his very name should be called "*Wonderful.*"

I. THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE MOST "WONDERFUL" BEING THIS WORLD EVER SAW.

(1.) *Because of the number and character of the prophesies announcing his advent and mission.*

When we consider the number of these prophe-

sies, and compare them with the actual facts of his life, we are filled with amazement. They appear more like matter of fact history, written by a spectator of the scenes, than prophesies of events yet hundreds of years in the future. There is scarcely a fact connected with the life and death of this wonderful being that had not been predicted with a minuteness and an accuracy which Omniscience only could have dictated.

(2.) *Because of what he said of himself.*

He distinctly declared that he existed before he was born. "Before Abraham was I am." Now, in the matter of natural birth, man is utterly without choice or control, nor is he consulted as to his coming, whether it shall be now or in the future, this place or that.

But Jesus Christ declared that he had perfect control in all these matters,—control in coming, and control in going,—"No man taketh away my life. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He actually said he was God. He invited all to come to him for pardon and eternal life, and declared that, if they did not so come, they should all die in their sins. He said he had power to call to his aid "twelve legions of angels," who would gladly tender him celestial protection, if required.

He said, "all power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever believeth on me shall never die." The person who makes such statements as these incurs grave responsibilities, and must be ready to make good his pretensions, or suffer a humiliating defeat. There is no getting around it; he must be more than man, or the most blasphemous wretch that ever lived.

(3.) *Because of what he did.*

His life was filled with deeds of sympathy and self-sacrificing benevolence. He had a brother's sympathy for the sorrowing and distressed, a word of comfort and hope for the unfortunate and erring. He healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people, raised the dead, and cast out devils at his word.

He assumed and exerted perfect control, both in the physical and moral world. The barren fig tree withered under his curse, and the angry sea cowered at his rebuke, and was still. At his command devils fled in terror from their possessions, and his word made the blind, the paralytic and the leprous whole. He pardoned the sins of the penitent, and accepted the homage and wor-

ship due only to God. He foretold the time and manner of his own death and resurrection, and made an engagement with his disciples to meet him in Galilee after the latter event.

He declared that he came into the world to suffer and die, and that unless he did so and rose again, the whole world must perish. He died praying for his murderers, rose with the offer of salvation upon his lips, and with the gift of peace, and the promise of another comforter, he ascended into heaven. Truly "never man spake or acted like this man;" "wonderful" in life; "wonderful" in word and work; "wonderful" in death and resurrection power; "wonderful" all the way through.

(4.) *Because of what he was.*

"Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh." Omnipotence clothed in frailty. Deity circumscribed to the dimensions of a man; so that the finite might understand and commune with the Infinite. He was not only a man, but a man utterly without wealth or social influence,—"a man of sorrows."

"Inured to poverty and pain,
A suffering life my Saviour led.
The Son of God, the son of man,
He had not where to lay his head."

"The light of the universe eclipsed and shining in darkness. The world's first gift to him was a manger, and its last a cross. He who owned the cattle upon a thousand hills, as the common shambles of his providence, was hungry. He who held the ocean in the hollow of his hand, as a dew drop in the vase of a lilly, was thirsty at Jacob's well, and could not quench his thirst without asking help of another. He who owned the wealth of the world, as a mere farthing in his exchequer, was so poor that he could not raise his tax money, till the sea brought it to him in the mouth of a fish. His eternity became invested with time. His omnipotence put on frailty. His immensity became subject to limitation; the Everliving began to be. The Source of knowledge learned wisdom, and the Fountain of life expired in death."—[Bascom.]

II. That Jesus Christ is the most Wonderful Being in Heaven.

Not that he is an intruder, or a new comer. He was at home in heaven, and dwelt amid the underived glory of his Godhead before man or angel was created.

He is the most "wonderful" Being in heaven, because of his History, Relationship and Work.

(1.) *His History.* He has a history of honor and glory in heaven, and a history of unspeakable

sorrow and suffering on earth. There he was served and worshipped by all holy intelligences, and was surrounded by the boundless splendors of his divine nature and attributes. Here he was poor and persecuted, scandalized, scourged and spit upon, and ultimately nailed to the cross, where the pale king of terrors waved his scepter of insulting triumph over him, as he publicly suffered a culprit's death.

He did not own even a grave, but was buried in the sepulcher of another. But having abolished death, "he could not be holden by it;" so he rose triumphantly from the tomb, and demonstrated the fact by appearing and conversing again and again with his disciples, after which he ascended into heaven, as our advocate, taking his glorified humanity with him.

(2.) *His Relationship.* He appears in heaven in the unique relationship of brother and Redeemer of our race, and Son of God,—"Head over all things to the church." "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Under his all-conquering dominion "every knee shall bow," and every enemy shall be destroyed. "Even death itself shall die, and that too when immortality is young, and its heirs have just begun to live." Our glorified humanity is with him on the very throne

of his Godhead. His hands, ridged with meritorious scars, now hold the reins of universal dominion. The old tribute of angelic and cherubic homage is still paid to him, while "a great multitude, which no man can number,"—

> "Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
> Their triumph to his death."

Angels who, on their glory-tinted pinions, are swift to do his bidding, are sent by him to this world, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." "Are they not all sent," &c. Heaven would not be heaven without him, and earth would wither into despair, if he ceased to be. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Through the marvelous relationship in which he stands to the divine and the human, the inhabitants of heaven behold the wonderful sight of God made man, and man made God. The two natures unite, coalesce, and harmonize so marvelously that they are essentially constituent elements of the one Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

(3) *His Work.* Through the *glorified human* lips of Jesus Christ the divine mandates for the control of the universe are now uttered. The feet once spiked to the cross now rest upon the throne. Through the person and work of this wonderful

Being, redeemed humanity is elevated to the very person and throne of the Deity.

> "In him the tribes of Adam boast
> More blessings than their fathers lost."

"He ever liveth to make intercession for us." To spread his kingdom over the nations, and to light up the dark habitations of cruelty with the transforming message of the cross. To ride on in conquering majesty, until the trophies of a subjugated world shall be laid at his feet,—until the shouts of a ransomed race shall be flung to the rejoicing heavens, and the dawn of the millennial glory shall burst upon our sin-cursed world.

> "Until all shall bow at his command,
> And the King that rules in Salem's towers
> Shall lighten every land."

Dean Swift says that to give a syllabus of a discourse is somewhat analogous to the use of the burning glass. It collects the diffused rays of thought, and concentrates them upon the memory and imagination. With a view to this, I shall here epitomise my salient points:—

I. That Jesus Christ is the most "Wonderful" Being this World ever saw.

(1.) *Because of the number and character of the prophesies announcing his advent and mission.*

(2.) *Because of what he said.*

(3.) *Because of what he did.*

(4.) *Because of what he was.*

II. That Jesus Christ is the most Wonderful Being in Heaven.

This is so because of:—

(1.) *His History.* His record of glory and honor in heaven. His history of suffering and humiliation on earth.

(2.) *His Relationship* to God and man,—Son of God, brother and Redeemer of man.

(3.) *His Work.* "Ever liveth to make intercession for us;" to spread his kingdom, and offer salvation to a guilty world. His *History*, *Relationship*, and *Work* invest him with a unique and undying interest, and constitute him the most "wonderful" Being, both on earth and in heaven.

XVIII.

JESUS KNOCKING.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."—REV., iii., 20.

IT is quite a common thing in Scripture to represent man by the figure of a mansion or dwelling. The simile is apt, simple and suggestive. Man is surely a habitation of many parts and sections. Every sense, sentiment, and affection may be regarded as a separate apartment. Viewed in this way, every man has the same number of rooms. Still, there is a great difference between one man and another, in the size, cleanliness and furnishing of apartments.

I. The PERSON,—"*I.*" Describe him. Show his sympathy and earnestness, by what the errand cost him.

(1.) His *Attitude*,—"I stand." Literally, "I have taken up my stand." It implies, not hastily abandoned, but patiently repeated effort. Yet, the very attitude and act may well alarm the ungodly and fill the procrastinating sinner with dismay. Brevity is both understood and implied. You never knock at a man's door all day. Underlying the figure is the fact that any "knock" may be the last, if no response be given.

(2.) His *Approach*,—"At the door."

It is a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity, as compared with all other religions, that it represents God as seeking man; all others represent man as seeking God. God and man could never have found each other, if God had not begun the seeking. A Greek writer has said, "Man cannot find God; God must find man." Heathen nations labored long under the delusion that they could find God and their own Saviour; and God gave them ample time and opportunity for the experiment. Prior to the Incarnation, the highest intellectual culture was reached. In the mystic schools of Egypt, in the Pantheistic schools of Chaldea and the East, all the questions that agi-

tate our modern schools of philosophy in Germany, Great Britain, and America were in full blast. They boasted in the perfection of their elocution and oratory. Demosthenes, the flash of whose eye, like the lightning, prepared a pathway for the thunder of his voice, swayed the multitudes by his faultless diction and majestic eloquence. Statuary rose to the height of perfection. Greek poetry remains still unrivaled,—the standard of taste and culture in modern times. God gave them every help, but no special revelation. They walked and groped in darkness, "if haply they might *feel after* him and find him." They sought him more by the touch, "feel after," than by special divine guidance, or the intuitions of faith. One after another of their systems of ethics and philosophy gave way; until, at the time of the incarnation, the nations had given over "walking" and groping, and were *sitting in darkness*, amid the stench of the smoking wicks of their wasted systems. I apprehend, the great object in the divine government of the Gentiles was to teach them the great lesson that man cannot, by *searching* or by the *understanding*, find out God. When general failure was felt and admitted by man, the great divine rescuer entered upon his mission of seeking.

He laid his glory by, took our nature upon him, and became obedient unto death, that he might bring hope and salvation to a world of lost and helpless sinners.

"With pitying eyes, the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw—and, oh, amazing love—
He flew to our relief.

Having arrived "at the door," behold his gracious overtures:—

(1.) Friendship with God, as his own proposition. "I will come in." Note the love and sympathy involved in this transaction.

(2.) Friendship with God, on an absolutely *human level.* "*At the door.*" At your door and mine. Just where and as we are. Jesus loves to set things right about our own doors, to set us building over against our own house; he knows what changes should be made, inside and out. Christian life is only every-day life spiritualized and ennobled by the indwelling of Jesus Christ.

(3.) Friendship with God as a *present blessing.* "I stand." The very grammar of the passage puts everything in the present tense; and Jesus uttered it sixty years after he had taken his place as our Advocate at the right hand of God. It is, therefore, specially to our dispensation.

(4.) Friendship with God *for all*,—"Any man." Then no man will ever voice the dungeons of the damned, with the groanings of despair, *simply* because he sinned; but because he "shut" the door in the face of Almighty love, and would not allow himself to be saved.

(3.) His *Act*,—"Knock." How? (1.) Providence. (2.) Conscience. (3.) Word. (4.) Spirit.

(4.) His *Appeal*,—"Behold." He speaks not to be intrusive, but to call attention to what he is doing, and to the fact that he is there. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*" He does not promise so much what he will do, as what he will be. Great natures seldom burden you with assurances; but to an Oriental, the graciousness and significance of the proposition would in an instant be felt.

II. The Purpose.

Keeping the figure before our minds, I notice, that the object of the Saviour is to save men from the guilt, pollution and dominion of sin. Though blessed with noble, lofty ranges of faculty, most men live in the *basement story*. Perhaps no man is to be found who properly uses all his apartments. We all have our favorite rooms. I have known many professing Christians who often frequented the apartments of faith and devotion, but who appeared never to have entered the noble room called

benevolence. If you should turn the knob and look in, you would see the windows all festooned with the spider-webs of neglect, and the floor carpeted with the dust of indifference. Naturally, most men prefer the basement; but occasionally you will find a man who prefers the lonely mansard of intellect, logic, speculation. Down near the ground, where the windows look out on the shop, the mill, the market, the seething, chafing world of business and pleasure, there you will find occupancy, commotion, and turmoil. Here you will find fractured hopes, there beastly sensuality; here shouts of laughter and defiant impenitency, and there groans of agony and despair. But the most lofty and ennobling apartments, those which look out upon the majestic, the spiritual, upon God and eternity, these are mostly unused, locked up in filth, or in stumbling darkness. The purpose of Jesus Christ, in seeking admission, is to open up the windows, throw back the shutters, unbolt the hatchways and doors, ventilate and cleanse the structure, and send men up into all parts of themselves, and to teach them by his own blessed inspiration and presence how to occupy and enjoy all parts of their complicated and wonderful structure.

(1.) His *Reasonable Conditions.* They imply two things:—(1.) Contingency,—"If any man hear my

voice." Here the tremendous power of free agency is recognized. That power by which a man can waive incarnate deity from his door, and spurn the salvation which he brings. If the conditions begun and ended with *hearing*, there could be no room for doubt as to the result of the Saviour's mission. It is not optional with the sinner whether he shall hear or not. He *must* hear, sooner or later, when *Jesus "knocks."* We sometimes fail to make the inmates of a house hear us; but Jesus never leaves any man's door without making himself heard.

(2.) *Submission.*—"And open the door." "Hear" and "open." These words do not follow each other as cause and effect. To know and to do are not synonymous terms. A man may "hear," and instead of opening may bolt his "door." To "open" is a voluntary act, to hear is not. "Hear and open the door." This represents *faith* and *obedience.* Mark, there is no *fixed feeling* or mental state specified, as invariably preceding or accompanying the act. No matter how you get to the "door," whether you *run* or *crawl*, whether you *sing* or *sigh* on the way. Great things in the gospel are always simple; and the *great* thing, the *simple* thing is to let him in. "Open the door."

III. The Promise.

(1.) His *Personal Presence*,—"I will come."

Not an archangel or a committee of seraphs shall come to befriend and help, but "I will come."

(2.) His *Personal Indwelling*.—"I will come in to him."

(3.) His *Personal Friendship*.—"I will sup with him."

In the East, to have broken bread at a man's table, is to be the friend and ally of that man ever afterwards. In reading the Bible, you may have been impressed with the singular hospitality of men in those days. Their promptness in killing a calf, or kneading bread, and preparing a meal for strangers, especially if of any apparent note or standing. The spirit underlying it was the manward side and manifestation of the spirit of the text. Men whose wealth consisted of flocks and herds were obliged to move from place to place, in order to find pasturage, and many bandit tribes and desperate characters were passing to and fro. Possession of property was more a question of muscle than of ethics in those days. The defenceless condition of the people fostered a spirit of hospitality, and that a friendly feeling which protected them, in the absence of law.

(4.) His *desire for mutual friendship*.—"And he with me."

An Oriental guest is sacred, in the estimation of his host, and, as I said, to have broken bread together is to be each other's friend and ally ever afterwards; and the force and significance of this Eastern custom was understood and evoked by our Saviour, when he said, "*I will sup with him.*"

To show that the friendship is to be reciprocal, binding on both parties, he *repeats* and *reverses* the words,—"*I will sup with him, and he with me.*" That is, I will be his friend in future, and he will be mine. I will protect his interests against the plans and purposes of his enemies, and he will protect mine.

XIX.

LAME MAN HEALED.

"Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour," &c.—ACTS, iii, 1-11.

BUT is not this an anti-climax? Is not this commonplace and insipid business after the marvels and ecstacies of yesterday? No: God's children never retrograde so long as, like the Master, they "go about doing good," and go "up to the temple at the hour of prayer." Religious ecstacies that do not leave behind them a new zest for "the hour of prayer," may well have the divinity of their origin called in question.

Peter and John were miraculously endowed by the Holy Ghost,—were leaders in the great Pentecostal revival; and yet, we see them going to the temple, and making use of the ordinary means of

grace, as though nothing special had occurred in their experience. Christian life cannot thrive and be healthy on nothing but the extraordinary, the marvelous, the extatic. A man who always seeks to revel in excitement and ecstacies may show to good advantage when he can kindle his torch at other people's fires; but he is, and cannot but be, a weak, shallow Christian, and fearfully lacking, both in root and fruit. God's oaks are made stalwart and immovable, as much by the storm as the sunshine.

I. The Companions,—"Peter and John."

Zeal and devotion; they were companions in their former vocation as fishermen; loved each other's society, and were the complement of each other in many constitutional and moral qualities; they were the very opposite to each other in temperament and mental characteristics. "Peter and John,"—two prominent men among the apostles. They were so in the Saviour's time; "one was speaker of the house, and the other a favorite with the Master." Each had a brother among the twelve with whom they were associated when originally called into the work; but now they seem to have knit together more closely than either of them to his brother, for the bond of friendship sometimes proves stronger than that of relationship.

(1.) *Their destination,*—"The temple."

Those who have been the greatest blessing to mankind, through all the ages, have loved God and frequented his temple. Any theory or notion, however plausible, which prompts men to ignore "the temple," and poisons their minds with the delusion that they can read their Bibles and worship God at home, is inimical to Pentecostal promptings, and was never produced by the Holy Ghost. We should hesitate, and seriously question any inspiration that would lead us to ignore the divinely appointed means of grace. The theory that a man who is able to go to church can serve God at home, and never go, is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. Apostolic practice is safe, and as a guide to Christian conduct should not be ignored. "Peter and John went up."

(2.) *Their harmony,*—"Went up together."

Nothing like Pentecostal power to harmonize opposite temperaments, and hold in check possible discordances and selfish tendencies in human nature. No greater evidence of the power of divine grace was ever seen, perhaps, than that witnessed at Pentecost, when the vital question of personal possession was so merged into that of the general welfare, that no man reckoned anything that he had was his own. Ananias and Saphira appear

to have been the only *marked* exception to this blessed spirit of brotherly regard and self-abnegation.

(3.) *Their look.*—"Peter fastened his eyes upon him with John."

Christianity is the only system in the world that knows how to "fasten its eyes upon" the afflicted and destitute, the guilty and the lost. "Science fastens its eyes upon inanimate matter; art fastens its eyes on beauty—art going up to the temple to pray, which I fear it seldom does, would fasten its eyes on the beautiful gate, and would never see the helpless beggar at its base. But Christianity, going up to the temple, fastened its eyes upon the poor cripple, and ever since its eyes have been turned in that direction. Science seeks out the secrets of the world; art seeks out the beauties of the world; but Christianity seeks out the ills of the world, and essays the God-like task of removing them. The words of the Bible are brimful of meaning. There is often more philosophy in one of its sentences, than in a score of pretentious volumes. 'Draw out thy soul to the hungry.' Is it not enough to draw out one's purse? No! 'Draw out thy soul.' The soul must be drawn out first, then the purse. That is Christi-

anity. So, 'Peter fastened his eyes upon him with John.'"*

(4.) *Their devotion,*—"At the hour of prayer."

What need of "the hour of prayer," now that these men have been so specially anointed with the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost? If any men in Jerusalem thought they had arrived at a state of Christian experience when they could dispense with the ordinary routine of religious worship, "Peter and John" were surely those men. But no men in Jerusalem were more consciously indebted to the means of grace, or more utterly dependent upon God. The more religion a man has, the more he will love "the temple" and "the hour of prayer." So, "Peter and John went up to the temple."

(5.) *Their poverty.*—"Silver and gold have I none."

Then, a child of God may be poor,—have no bank account, "none." Then, God may be specially honoring men, and fitting them for extraordinary careers of usefulness, who are without worldly means or influence. In this materialistic age, when men are judged of by their money, and not by their character,—by what they have, and

*"Studies in Acts," by J. C. Jones, to whom I am indebted for some help in this discourse.

not by what they are, it is well to emphasize the fact that manhood and money are not interchangeable terms. These two special favorites of heaven had no real estate, or assets of any kind. "Silver and gold have I none." The power that lifts and heals a crippled world is not carried about by men in their pocket-books, nor does it grow out of their bank accounts or social standing. It comes through the right relationship of the soul to Jesus Christ, and absolutely without regard to a man's worldly condition.

(6.) *Their power.*—"Rise up, and walk."

"And he, leaping up, stood and walked." That is the kind of giving that does not impoverish the giver, like the loaves and fishes, the more given the more there is left to give. That is like the giving of the sun. My brother, would you enjoy, with a tenfold zest, "the hour of prayer," strengthen some weak ankles, bring sunshine to some heart, on your way "to the temple." The sure, the safe, the triumphant way to come up to the offering of the evening sacrifice of our lives, is to spend our time in doing good, and strengthening the ankle-bones of a crippled world on the way. "Rise up and walk." That is the main power the church lacks just now to make her ready for the conquest of the world; and that is the power for the exercise of

which a crippled world fastens its eyes upon us. Neither wealth, nor education, nor social influence can atone for this divine afflatus,—this heavenly anointing.

II. *The cripple.*—"A man lame from his mother's womb."

Many persons become lame through accident or affliction; but this man was a born cripple. Being a physician himself, Luke is somewhat minute and philosophical, in describing the cure; he says: "Immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength." The seat of the difficulty was in his feet and ankles. There was an utter weakness growing, it may be, out of imperfect development, or malformation of the bones and muscles.

(1.) *His location,*—"At the gate of the temple."

Where? "At the gate of the temple." Then, this cripple was no fool. He understood the philosophy of benevolence. "Gate of the temple." The kindest and most sympathetic people in the world are praying people. Persons who obey the first table of the law are most likely to obey the second. Nine tenths of all the money raised for benevolent purposes, and for the support of our charitable institutions, comes from the pockets of those who go "up to the temple at the hour of prayer." All manner of beggars flock to the "gates of the tem-

ple." Sometimes they sit at the gates of trade; but men in authority soon sternly tell them to "move on." They sometimes sit at the gates of pleasure and fashion; but none, save the dogs, pay them any attention. Beggars know that the temple is the great almshouse of the world. So this lame man's location was at the "gate of the temple."

(2.) *His attitude*,—"Lay at the gate."

One of the most helpless of men. We have seen thousands of lame men who could go almost anywhere, through the aid of artificial supports, who through the use cane or crutches could almost compete with those who were well. "But this man was so utterly helpless that he could not even avail himself of the aid of a crutch, but was obliged to be carried from one place to another. Raphael seems to have seized this feature. He has drawn at a little distance from him another deformed man, who however is able to hobble along by the aid of a crutch." But, in the picture of this man, there is neither cane nor crutch to be seen. He was "laid daily at the gate of the temple."

(3.) *His vocation*,—"To ask alms."

Both the place and time selected by this cripple to ply his vocation indicate that he was a shrewd, thoughtful man. The place was the very best. "The gate of the temple," where the best

men anywhere to be found were daily passing. The time was also the very best. "The Feast of the Passover." On that very occasion, we are told, that "there were in Jerusalem devout men out of every nation under heaven;" and, during the entire period of the feast, multitudes were constantly passing to and from the temple. So, thougtful man that he was, he had his friends lay him, "daily, at the gate of the temple."

(4.) *His cure.*—(1.) It was *instantaneous.*

"Immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength."

(2.) *It was thorough,*—"Walked and leaped."

His marvelous cure put him in immediate possession of man's greatest earthly boon,—*health.* Health, without money, is vastly to be preferred to money without health. So the cripple was instantaneously and perfectly healed.

(5.) *His gratitude,*—"Walking and leaping, and praising God."

The accession of strength was sudden, and his manifestation of it was equally sudden. "And he, leaping up." There was no timid shrinking, lest he should overtax his new strength. The man that God blesses and saves need not be afraid of overdoing, and bringing on a relapse, by anything his heart prompts him to do, in the shape of let-

ting others know what has happened, and "praising God." I like a religion that makes a man feel like "leaping and praising" the God of his salvation from the very start. If a man's religion does not put the spirit of praise into him, he will never be able to do much in awakening and converting the world. The want of the times is a joyful, happy, triumphant Christianity.

III. The Crowd,—"All the people."

This was no doubt a mingled multitude, partly of temple worshippers, and passers by, and onlookers, including no doubt many who were present at the crucifixion, who had shouted, "Crucify him."

(1.) *Their evidence,*—"Saw him." They saw that a mighty miracle had been wrought.

(2.) *Their recognition,*—"They knew that it was he."

He had sat at the gate so long that everybody knew him, and that may be the reason why he was favored with this miraculous cure. Every person saw, at a glance, that it was the man "who sat at the gate and begged."

(3.) *Their excitement,*—"People ran together."

They wisely argued that the change could only be effected by a divine cause. Extend this reasoning, and you have one of the most unanswerable

arguments in favor of Christianity. The transformations wrought by it in society prove it to be divine in its origin.

(4.) *Their emotions*,—"Wonder and amazement." Strange that they should be so affected by this miracle, after having witnessed so many by the Master. Perhaps the horrors of the crucifixion had already begun to fill them with remorse and fear, as they began to find themselves driven to believe in the resurrection; and it may be that this miracle, savoring so much of the power of Jesus, suggested the idea of his invisible presence. So "the people ran into the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering."

Application: (1.) Let us imitate Peter and John, in our appreciation of the means of grace. "Up to the temple."

(2.) Let us not disturb the services by coming in late; but, like them, let us try to be punctual; "At the hour."

(3.) Pentecostal blessings of yesterday cannot supply our need of God's inspiration and blessing today.

(4.) It is the duty of the unconverted to "fasten their eyes" upon spiritual matters, to yield to right influences, to allow themselves to be carried daily to the gate of right feeling and conduct. If

this lame man had rebelled that morning against being carried "to the gate of the temple, he might never have been healed. My brother, if you have not the heart or will to go yourself to the healing power, do not rebel against being helped, but willingly yield yourself to be carried by the sympathy and prayers of others where the healing power may reach you.

(5.) Learn that, though the eyes of the sinner may be fastened upon the servant, the Master *only can heal.* "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

MORAL SURGERY.

"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."—MATT., v., 30.

WHY not allow somebody else to "cut it off?' Sin is such a peculiarly terrible thing that no person can amputate it but the sinner himself. In the text, we are told here by the great Teacher, that "it is profitable for us" to part with our most highly prized endowments and blessings, rather than that they should bring us under the deadly influence of sin.

I. *That the sinner's sins are his own,—a part of himself,*—"Thy right hand."

People like to own things, to point to this and that and say, "These are all mine." Men are getting prematurely old, in their efforts to own houses and lands, and money, and influence. But, it is a singular fact, that in this general strife for ownership, that men are trying to disown the only thing that really belongs to them, that is their own sins.

It is remarkable with what facility men find owners for their sins. They are seldom at a loss to point out the person or thing upon which they put the blame. It is almost as rare as an angel's visit to find a person who owns that he only is to blame for his wrong doing. The first step towards the reformation of a sinner is to make him feel that his sins are his own. When a man comes to feel that all the sins he ever committed are his own, he has all he can carry, and is not far from the kingdom of God.

II. *That deliverance from sin can be effected only through the sinner's own act.* "Cut it off."

Though human help is of no avail in this great operation, yet, by divine grace, the sinner is enabled to strike the blow which, in will and purpose, separates him from his sins; at which point the Holy Ghost comes in, and "the great transaction is done."

The figure used in this text indicates that the removal of sin is no mere pastime or recreation. It is:

(1.) Painful.—"*Cut* it off." "Right hand;" the most natural and desirable of our bodily functions. In the removal of sin, the sinner must persistently abandon many things that were very enjoyable, perhaps profitable. "Cut it off." It demands:

(2.) Promptness,—"Cut." The promptness of a keen, incisive stroke or pressure. No tapering off, in a life of sin. You can taper on, but never off. Sin yields to nothing but the knife. "Cut it off."

No striking at random, when seeking to get rid of sin. "Cut *it*." Strike with the determination to "cut *it*," and not to show the luster of your blade, or your skill in using it. The sinner must also be—

(3.) Persistent,—"Cut it *off*." In putting the knife to his sins, the danger is that the sinner will stop cutting before he gets them "*off*." No reformation will amount to anything that does not involve separation from sin. Better that the sinner had never lifted the knife, than stop in the middle of the operation.

What are the words used here? "If thy right hand offend thee," put it in a sling,—put on a glove? No; iniquity won't stay in a sling; you can't hold moral leprosy in a glove. "Cut it off." That is, make a thorough job of it. Make up your mind to get rid of sin, and then take hold, and by the grace of God perform the operation,—"Cut it off."

III. *That the sinner, in order to make reformation permanent, must abandon his sins.* "Cast it from thee."

The eye is out, the hand is amputated, therefore act accordingly. Like any amputated thing, have nothing more to do with it. "Cast it from thee." That's what moral as well as physical surgery means.

(1.) Think of the figure used in the text, and see how suggestive it is of danger.

The skilful physician recommends amputation only as the last resort. Without it, the patient is already in a hopeless condition. Bear in mind, therefore, the alarming moral condition which the very use of this figure implies.

(2.) The great Physician himself urges the operation. "He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."

(3.) Every consideration, past, present and future, calls upon the sinner to decide, and the great Physician says, "*It is profitable for thee.*"

(4.) Think of the fearful consequences of neglect: "Cast into hell."

My brother, though you must use the knife yourself, do not forget that the great Physician will be present to help in the operation. Though you must do the cutting, he will take up the arteries, bind up the wound, and "make you every whit whole."

NOW AND THEN.

"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."—1st. Cor., xiii., 12.

PAUL had just been speaking of the "child," and the "man," and no doubt that but dimly represents the difference between the "Now" in this world, and the "Then" in the world to come.

I. Our organs of vision "*Now*," implied in the words, "we see."

These are our mental and spiritual powers of apprehension and knowledge. Through these we learn all we know of God. But these organs are weak and defective, by reason (1.) of *sin*. (2.) Want of proper *activity* and *culture*.

II. Our medium of seeing "*Now*." "Through a glass darkly."

Allusion is here made to those burnished metalic reflectors used by Orientals, as mirors are by us. The truth taught is, that spiritual and divine things are seen only by reflection, and that that which reflects is incapable of giving a full representation:—

(1.) Because of its own defectiveness. (2.) Because of our defective vision. (3.) Because of the magnitude of that which is to be revealed.

The "glass" through which we see consists of three things:—(1.) Nature. (2.) Revelation. (3.) Providence. These three represent God in his *Works*, his *Words*, and his *Ways*. But that there is mystery and darkness about them, who is vain enough to deny?

That God is seen in *nature*, *revelation*, and *providence*, we are all more than willing to admit; but when, with our weak vision, we peer into these reflectors, what more can we say than that "we see through a glass darkly."

III. Our organs of vision, "*Then.*"

Very much the same as "*Now;*" but how greatly developed and improved no mortal may know. The comprehensive knowledge, the strength and sweep of vision enjoyed by the redeemed may defy the powers of the most daring imagination to conceive.

IV. Our medium of seeing, "*Then.*" "Face to face."

No glass any more, but blessed contact,—actual presence. "Then." (1.) The enormity of sin. (2.) The love of God in the gift of his Son. (3.) The righteousness of God's moral government, and (4.)

The glory of the redeemed will be seen as never before. The "child" becomes a "man," and for the first time and forever "puts away all childish things." The light of eternity will no doubt stamp as "childish" many things which are tenaciously defended in this world. Thank God, however, we can see and know enough "*now*" to make us gloriously safe and triumphant "*then*." Though "now we see through a glass darkly," we can see enough of God to assure us "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "*Now*" and "*then*" are closely and vitally related. Our "*then*" will drape itself in gloom or glory, because of its relation to our "*now*." Right use of "*now*" will fill us with peace and rapture, and crown us with glory "*then*."

HEIRS.

"Heirs of God."—Rom. viii., 17.

I. *Then the Christian is going to a rich home and a glorious future.*

Therefore, he ought not to be too much elated or depressed by the pleasures or privations of the journey. An eye to the rest and glory at the end should keep him from getting weary of the way.

II. *Then the Christian should not debase himself by an undue attachment to the things of time.*

How unreasonable to see an "heir of God" so swallowed up in the world that he has neither taste nor time to pray, or make suitable efforts to get ready for his heavenly inheritance.

III. *Then no man should speak of having made sacrifices in becoming a Christian.*

Any person, making such a declaration, should blush to the roots of his hair, and ask God to forgive him for an utterance so untrue.

IV. *Then an heir of God should be made "meet for his inheritance."*

Without a meetness for it, the inheritance would be a burden rather than a blessing. Our business here is to cultivate the manners, to learn the language, and acquire the tempers of our future abode. May we not forget our errand.

V. *Then, in securing this meetness, the Christian may confidently expect divine aid.*

As soon doubt the rising of the sun, as that God would fail to aid and bless the man who is struggling to be pure and Christ-like.

CHRISTIAN SAFETY.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—ROM., viii., 28.

HOW inspiring, in this age of doubt and conjecture, to find a man who knows what he says, on so weighty a subject, is true.

I. That "all things" act ENERGETICALLY. They "work."

II. That "all things" act HARMONIOUSLY. They "work together."

III. That "all things" act BENEFICENTLY. They "work together for good."

IV. That "all things" act PROSPECTIVELY. They "work together for" the present and eternal welfare of the righteous. "For good to them that fear God."

V. That "all things" act PROXIMATELY. They "work together" in the growth of saintly confidence in divine providence, and in the power and goodness of God. "We know that all things work," etc.

HIDDEN TREASURE.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart."—PSALM, cxix. 11.

NO man ever magnified the word of God more than David. It was his joy in retirement; his inspiration in sorrow; his "song in the house of his pilgrimage." David had done many wise things in his life; but in the eight little monosyllables of my text we have an account of one of the wisest things he ever did: "Thy word have I hid in my heart."

I. THE TREASURE,—"Thy word." This precious deposit involves a property and a possession, compared with which all earthly accumulations are poor indeed. Not like anything else in the world. "Thy word." No person's word like his; it implicates us. His thoughts towards sinners, and towards sin. The way of approach to him. His requirements of us. His promised help, and how to secure it. It points out everything we need to make life happy, death triumphant, and eternity glorious.

It is "Truth," "Light," a "Guide," a "Hammer," "Fire," "The power of God unto salvation." It involves the possession of Jesus Christ himself; for, "in the beginning was the word, . . . and the *word* was God." David was not blessed with the completed "word," as we are; but he could not hide even what he had of the Old Testament in his heart, without finding Jesus Christ stowed away among the treasure.

II. The Treasurer,—"I." In the matter of salvation, God does not deal with communities, as such, but with individuals. No man can serve God by proxy. No man can be saved for another man; nor can one man force God's word, or God's salvation, into the heart of another. Religion is absolutely a matter of choice,—it is a matter solely between God and the individual. "I have hid." If a man would have that treasured up in his heart which would make him richer and happier, in this world and in the next, he must do the treasuring up himself.

New Testament piety is simply man doing business with God, on his own terms. "Thy,"—there is God. "I,"—there is man. These two are the only persons practically involved in the gift and reception of salvation, including always, of course, the great Reconciler, through whom they were

brought together. "Thy" God. "I," man:—face to face. Did you ever get so near? Is your relation to God of that personal, proximate kind now?

III. The Treasury,—"My heart."

God's word is pre-eminently a heart treasure. So true is this, that the saving truths of the Gospel are not believed by the head, but by the heart:—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Everything in the shape of treasure, that is not of the heart, must drop out of our possession and consciousness at last, as that which is foreign, antequated, and worthless.

We must not fail to notice that the Treasurer here has unrestricted control of both the treasure and treasury. He may fill the treasury or keep it empty, and none can compel him to do otherwise. David filled his, and kept it full: "Thy word have I hid in my heart." The Pharisees carried it outside, on their phylactaries, and the Scribes carried it in their heads. It may be found in various places: in the house, in the head, in the memory, in the hands, and on the tongue; but, to be of any saving value, it must find a lodgment in the heart.

Parents, you wish to hide it in your children; but how about yourselves? Sunday-school teacher, you try to hide the word in the hearts of your scholars, but have you hid it in your own? If you

have never hid it subjectively in yourselves, you cannot be other than defective bunglers in your efforts to hide it objectively in others. It is well to have it stored in the memory, better to have it in the understanding; but best of all to have it in the heart. The devil has a great memory for Scripture; he can understand and quote it correctly, but it does him no good, because he has no heart faculty for its reception.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart." The declaration implies:—

(1.) *Reception.* If it be hidden, it must be received; and where it is received, the judgment approves, the affections embrace, the heart feels, and the life conforms to its teaching.

(2.) *Regard.* Things may be hidden, not so much for concealment as security. See parable of the hidden treasure.

(3.) *Remembrance.* It is laid away as something to which the treasurer has constant access. Memory hides things in the mind for future use. A sanctified memory is preferable to a good natural one. The spirit of the word may be felt in the heart when the letter is not retained in the memory. My dear friends, lay hold of and hide this precious treasure in your hearts.

(1.) You cannot successfully meet and master

the dangerous foes and crises of life without it. (2.) It will silence complaint. (3.) Guard you against temptation. (4.) Give you consolation in bereavement. (5.) Victory in death.

THE PRODIGAL.

"A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said unto his father," &c.—LUKE, xv., 11-32.

I. Here is a young man laying his life-plans, and his first idea is to get away from his "father," "*into a far country.*" Woe to the young man, the key-note of whose life is freedom from restraint. II. Freedom from restraint leads to recklessness,—"*wasted his substance.*" III. Recklessness leads to want,—"*he began to be in want.*" IV. Want leads to recollection,—"*how many hired servants of my father,*" etc. V. Recollection leads to repentance,—"*I perish of hunger.*" VI. Repentance leads to reformation,—"*I will arise and go to my father.*" VII. Reformation leads to restoration,—"*bring hither the best robe.*" VIII. Restoration leads to rejoicing,—"*they began to be merry.*" Rejoicing over the returning prodigal may be well enough; but the character of the elder brother is vastly better. Never to have gone into a life of sin is better than

to reform afterwards. The wounds and poison of sin may be healed, but the scars will remain and may be visible at the judgment.

The prodigal's joyous restoration cannot restore to him the "portion" and possibilities "wasted" in the "far country." Nor can he ever get so far away, or so completely separated from that "country" as not to hear occasionally the feint *rustle* of the *husks*, and the *grunting of the swine*.

THE HINDERER.

"Satan hindered us."—1st. THES., ii., 18.

IS that so? then man is opposed, in the path of duty, by a personal antagonist. All agree that there are hindrances, but some deny that there is a personal hinderer,— an invisible, personal devil. They say it is a reflection upon the power and goodness of God to believe that he would allow a personal devil to exist. They hoot at the idea that a God of infinite power and beneficence would permit an invisible, malignant being to exist, whose sole business is to rebel against his authority, and damage and destroy his creatures.

I wonder where such people have spent their

time, or what their observation is good for. They cannot but see, whether God would permit an invisible being to pursue such a course or not, that thousands of visible ones are constantly engaged in just that kind of business. There are multitudes of men and women whose only business is to do mischief,—to debauch the young, to disgrace familes, and send sorrow and desolation into human hearts and homes. The Bible teaches that there is an invisible, personal devil, whose constant work is to hinder people in their efforts to do right. He does this largely by suggesting:—

I. Doubts. The terrible catastrophe of the fall was accomplished by a doubt:—"Ye shall not surely die." The more prominent and useful Christians are, the more Satan tries to "hinder" them, and the more they are convinced of his malignant power. A man's God-consciousness is about in proportion to his devil-consciousness. If a man hardly knows whether there is a devil or not, he hardly knows whether there is a God or not, so far as a change of heart or personal communion with him is concerned. You can't run a church to amount to anything without a devil and the bad place to which the old fellow belongs. Those men who have been burning luminaries in their day, who have been most honored of God, in

elevating and blessing the world, were all firm believers in the existence of Satan. And all the so-called Christians, put together, who deny his existence, could not convince a single sinner of his need of a Saviour, or help a single penitent into the kingdom.

Millions have been damned by a doubt. We live in an age in which almost everything that is worth believing is doubted. Human depravity is seen in nothing more clearly than in the manner in which people act when in doubt, religiously. Instead of wisely protecting our own interests, we almost always give Satan the benefit of our doubts. Nothing pleases the devil so well as to get people in doubt as to his own existence:—the Atonement, the Scriptures, hell, the judgment, etc. He knows if he can get them in doubt upon these great verities, that he will soon have them acting as though there were no truth in any of them. He hinders, also, by suggesting and magnifying —

II. Difficulties. What multitudes, young and old, he "hinders" from giving their hearts to God, by magnifying the difficulties and discouragements in the way. Satan is not honest enough to frankly tell people that this is a life of difficulty and turmoil, whether a man is good or bad; but insinuates that life's most crushing difficulties are met in

the paths of righteousness. But, "he is a liar, and the father of it." This is confessedly a world of trial; and, whether men are profane or pious, they will meet difficulties and discouragements. This world is a vast institution of learning, in which our imperfect faculties are being fostered for the employment of a vigorous and eternal manhood.

We are not at home yet, only at school. Our work is to master the dangerous and difficult curriculum of probation. Our lessons may be hard, our fare rough, and our trials many, but God's cheering promise is: "All things work together for good to them that love God." Satan "hinders" by:

III. DISTRACTIONS. He dislikes a fixed, vigorous purpose for the right. He loves to distract, to dissipate the mind, and disincline it to think, or fix its thoughts on eternal realities. He cares not though men should be piously inclined, and even make resolves, now and then, to soon do better. If he can keep them from that concentration which will prompt them to an immediate surrender to God; he knows that all the rest will be of no avail in the final issue. In being a "hinderer," Satan has a decided advantage. It is easy to distract the mind, to suggest difficulties, to magnify obstacles. It is easier to "hinder" an act than to counteract its influence afterwards,—easier to hinder a man

from sewing seed than to counteract the effects of his sowing.

As a "hinderer," no doubt Satan is largely the cause of two things: (1.) Much that we would do but cannot: as, Paul's purpose to visit the church at Thessalonica was somehow frustrated by the powers of darkness. And, also, for many things we do not do. (2.) Much that we could do if we would: as, our many sins of omission. These latter, especially, are no doubt caused largely by doubts, supposed difficulties, distraction of thought, or lack of interest, superinduced by Satanic agency. He is never done urging the omission of present duty. Satan never "hindered" any man from doing a wrong act, and he suggests no time but the present for doing it. He not only seeks to "hinder" our performances but also and especially our purposes. "His greatest battles are fought in the mind." The inner life of most people is like a slaughterhouse, reeking with the blood and stench of murdered convictions, and the ghastly carcasses of slaughtered vows.

Application: This great antagonist to Christian progress and efficiency is terribly heartless and implacable. You can neither entreat nor persuade him. You may reason with God, but you must "resist the devil." In proportion to our loyalty to

God, and our purpose not to be stopped, will Satan fail in his efforts to "hinder." Let us not forget to take the inspiring fact with us into the conflicts of life, that while there is a mighty hinderer, there is also an Almighty helper.

SIN'S GROWTH AND CONSEQUENCES.

"When I saw among the spoils," &c.—JOSHUA, vii., 21.

Germs, on same text, for variety in alliteration: I. The Head,—"*I saw.*" II. The Heart,—"*I coveted.*" III. The Hand,—"*I took them.*" IV. The Hurry,—"*I hid them.*" V. The horror,—"*Israel stoned him.*"

I. The Fascination,—"*I saw.*" II. The Feeling,—"*I coveted.*" III. The Felony,—"*I took them.*" IV. The Fear,—"*I hid them.*" V. The Fate,—"*Israel stoned him.*"

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SIN.

Here I deal with only part of the verse:—

I. The Attraction,—"*I saw,*" etc. II. The Appetite,—"*I coveted.*" III. The Appropriation,—"*I took them.*"

I. The Glance,—"*I saw.*" II. The Greed,—"*I coveted.*" III. The Guilt,—"*I took.*"

I. The Look,—"*I saw.*" II. The Lust,—"*I coveted.*" III. The Larceny,—"*I took.*"

THE SPIRITUAL RACER.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize."—1st. COR., ix., 24.

THE sacred is often best illustrated by the secular Through things known a wise teacher imparts a knowledge of things that were unknown. Paul's practical knowledge of human nature is seen here in his style of teaching. Nothing could so vividly impress the people of Corinth with the importance of religion as to have it presented in the imagery of their great national games. To the national life of Greece, those games were of as much importance as their great annual feasts were to the national life of the Jews.

I. THE RACE Christian life is a race. Is that so? Then it is no haphazard thing; it is marked off and measured: it has a starting point and a goal.

(1.) *The Race begins at the Cross.* The Christian, at his conversion, enters the race course, and his

name is recorded and published. As might be expected, those Grecian games, renowned as they were, do not adequately represent Christian life. We have more to do than to run a race. We have also enemies, many and malicious, to encounter as we run. We have a trinity against us, as well as for us,—a misleading, destructive trinity, the world, the flesh, and the devil, are all leagued to hinder our progress.

(2.) *The Race ends at Death.* You cannot tell what the end is going to be by the beginning. The most hopeful beginning may have a hopeless ending. A good start is of immense value; but it is not he that maketh a fine start, or he that maketh respectable speed towards the middle, but "he that endureth unto the end, that shall be saved."

It does not take very long for the racer to lose all the advantage of a good start: and a life, though nobly run, if it fail in the home stretches, will be sure to miss the crown.

II. The Racers. Who are they? All who have forsaken sin, accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and publicly entered the path of obedience. But, may not a person be a racer and nobody know it? The Bible does not speak of invisible racers, but of those who are "compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses." Those Gre-

cian athletes were in training long before the day of conflict came. But the Christian's training begins with the race. He trains in the race, and thus gains agility and skill through the turmoil of the contest. The leading ideas of the figure are, that the racers:—

(1.) *Strip for the Race.* "Lay aside every weight." Nothing that hinders must be left on. "Every weight." A thing may be a "weight" and not a "sin." Like the loose robe, flapping about the limbs of the racer; a "weight" is anything that distracts or retards,—anything, without which you would be more at ease in your movements, and could get along better.

(2.) *Progress.*—"Run." After stripping for the race and starting, I know not anything that more naturally follows than *progress.* Many appear to be so lightly freighted with earnestness and determination, that their stock is about all exhausted by the time they get onto the track, so that they never get out of sight of the starting point. Think how rediculous a lazy lounger would have appeared, hanging around the ancient stadium, professing to be a racer, but never getting out of sight of the starting point. My brother, dash into the race, or leave the ground.

(3.) *Perseverance.* "A race." Not a little jet of

speed, because one feels like it, or down street for fun; but "A Race." Christianity demands not only prompt action, but continuity of effort. The whole man must be thrown into the race, and continue in it, or the goal will never be reached. If the goal could be reached by a spasmodic effort, many would soon be crowned with victory. If religion were only a thing of frames and feelings, some would soon fly to the goal, especially if the feeling held out.

(4.) *Concentrated Effort.* "Run a Race." Christianity tends to expand, broaden and deepen human nature, because of its strong, unifying tendency. It harmonizes and concentrates all his powers, and, with a noble obliviousness to surrounding attractions, hurls the whole man into the race for "the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

(5.) *Watchfulness.* "So run that ye may obtain." Christian activity is not a blind, haphazard thing. It is intelligently under the sway of reason; it is both God prompted and God sustained. "So run." We are to keep our eyes about us, lest we stumble. Lest the enemy may get an advantage. "So run" that the body may be kept under. A pampered body means disappointment, defeat, disgrace. Paul says: "I keep under"—I buffet, I bruise—"my

body." Our lower nature must be "kept under," mastered, pounded black and blue, if need be.

III. The Reward. In the stadium, this consisted of a garland, or crown of olive or pine leaves. The name of the victor was also celebrated in a triumphal ode, and a statue was erected to his memory. It was a great honor one of the greatest in a land where the gymnastic art was so highly appreciated that even royalty did not hesitate to enter the lists.

But the prize, like all earthly honors, was fading and perishable. Those laurels would quickly wither, and the applause would soon die away into silence. But the prize for which the Christian contends is an incorruptible crown. It is a "crown of righteousness," a "crown of life," a "crown of glory.' To have righteousness and life in perfection is the true glory of man, and this is the prize for which we run.

Proud moment, that, when the successful racer had the chaplet placed upon his brow, amid the applause of thousands. Grander moment for the Christian athlete, when, amid the shouts of rejoicing myriads, the pierced hands of Jesus place upon his head the crown of glory, with the blessed words of approval: "Well done," etc. Only let me carry

the consciousness that such a reception shall be mine at last, and I would not barter my prospects for the fame of heroes or the blood of kings.

PENITENCE AND PARDON.

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and he heard my cry," &c.—PSALM, xl., 1-3.

I SHALL summarize and enforce lessons of text by emphasizing the following words, which, as a help to memory, shall begin with the letter P.

I. PENITENCE. "An horrible pit,"—"Miry clay."*

David's backsliding ended in hearty repentance. The figure used is that of a man who, by his own recklessness, has fallen into a pit, from which he cannot extricate himself, and in which he cries aloud for help.

(1.) His penitence was profound. A "pit." (2.) It was distressing, "An horrible pit." In stenchful mire, in which slimy reptiles crawled and lived. (3.) It was tenacious,—"Miry clay."

David's was the old style repentance. He could neither scrape, nor rub, nor brush it off,—"Miry

* I am much indebted to "The Lay Preacher" in this sketch.

clay." Every effort he made to get out only made him more filthy, and sent him further into the mire. Much of what passes for penitence now-a-days has very little of the tenacity of "miry clay." It is more like a smirching here and there of dry dust, so much in spots, and so light that the ordinary breezes of business, or the pliant whisk of pleasure is sufficient to brush it all away. His penitence was so deep that it was impossible for him to get rid of it, and so he betook himself to—

II. PRAYER. "I waited patiently for the Lord."

(1.) His prayer was full of energy and emotion. "My cry." And well indeed it might.

(2.) It was hopeful,—"I waited." He expected divine help, and kept on looking and asking for it.

(3.) It was persistent,—"I waited patiently." The original has it: "Waiting, I waited,"—a Hebraism, which signifies vehement solicitude. With such profound penitence and earnest prayer, what could more naturally occur than—

III. PARDON. "He heard my cry."

Of course he did; he always does. God would drop, unfinished, a constellation of worlds, sooner than allow a penitent to "cry" unheeded, who is "patiently" praying for salvation, with the *full determination to keep on.*

(1.) It was an unconstrained pardon. "He in-

clined unto me." He might have let him "cry" on, but it was in his great heart to help.

(2.) It was a conscious pardon. "He brought me up." David knew that the glorious transformation had taken place.

(3.) It was a thorough pardon. "Up out of." Not up a little way, to drop him down again into the "miry clay." God never drops a man, or holds him dangling midway between guilt and pardon. "Up out of." Salvation is not a getting down, but a getting up. So, God heard the prayer of this penitent, and pardoned him, and the natural result was—

IV. POWER. "Set my feet upon a rock."

The figure here indicates a spiritual strength, which fits its possessor for a life of uprightness and usefulness. David had hitherto lacked this, and hence fell. This power is twofold: (1.) Standing power,—"Set my feet upon a rock."(a) Power to deny self.(b) Power to say *no* to the tempter.(c) Power to do right without regard to consequences. (2.) Acting power,—"Established my goings."(a) Stability when mingling with the ungodly world.(b) Stability in sorrow, as well as in joy.(c) Stability amid the mysteries of providence.

The penitent having prayed and received par-

don and power, what more seemly than that he should indulge in the spirit of—

V. PRAISE. "A new song in my mouth."

This was the only natural climax within his reach. True penitence dissolves into praise as naturally as one picture melts into another, on the stereoptican's screen.

(1.) David's song was noted for its *freshness.* "A new song."

(2.) It was not his own production; it was *divinely* in-breathed. "He hath put a new song." Nature had endowed David with fine musical talents; but no native gifts, however commanding, can reach the altitude, or compass the unearthly harmonies of the "new song."

(3.) It was noted for its *catholicity.* "Many shall hear it." Religion that is the in-breathing of God is always catholic. Theoretic and sectarian religion is always narrow. In creed, the church has always been divided, and always will be. Only in her songs of praise, her grand old hymns, so full of Christian experience, is she a unit. All creeds can unite in singing: "Rock of Ages;" "Jesus, lover of my soul," &c.

FISHERMEN.*

"Fishers of men."—MATT., iv., 19.

FOLLOWING out the imagery of the text, I shall present two or three propositions suggested by it, and draw some practical inferences which seem naturally to follow.

I. THAT GOSPEL MINISTERS ARE FISHERMEN.

(1.) *Then it is a mistake to think that the ministry is a life of idleness and ease.*

Bear in mind the kind of men Jesus had in view, when he used these words. He was standing on the shore, and saw all about him the class of men to whom he referred. Men who toiled night and day, and in all sorts of weather, to earn a scanty living. So the ministry is a life of hardship and toil, etc.

(2.) *Then it is an erroneous idea that any man will make a preacher.*

It used to be that all the strong, brilliant boys were fitted for other vocations, and the one that was thick-headed, frail, or dyspeptic, was set apart for the ministry. How rediculous. Has every man the strength and courage to endure the toil

* Outlines of a Sermon before the Preachers' Meeting, Phila., 1886

and hardship of a fisherman, on our great lakes, or on the sea? No! So, in the ministry, etc.

(3.) *Then, without patience and perseverance, no man can succeed as a preacher.*

Unless one is well stocked with patience, to fish two hours and take nothing is enough to disgust any man with the whole business. Few things are more trying than fish; at times they are provokingly coquettish. They bite or only nibble, just as they please. They disappear suddenly, and take their own time in again coming within your reach. So the fisherman must have patience, and await their pleasure. So in our efforts to catch men, etc.

II. That Gospel Preaching is Fishing.

(1.) *Then a love for souls is essential to ministerial success.*

You can no more catch men than you can catch fish, unless you love them. The model fisherman loves a fish; he loves the look of it, the movements of it, and, generally speaking, is an enthusiast over a fish. And no man can catch souls who does not love them, and long for their salvation.

(2.) *Then the Gospel fisherman must study the tastes and habits of the fish.*

If we would succeed in "catching men," we must *know* men. We must know their habits, prejudices, aims, motives. We must know men as

they are, not as we think they ought to be. It would be very pleasant for the Gospel fisherman if men were made quiet, docile, obedient, and easily caught; but they are not made that way, and if we would succeed in catching them, we must know them as they are.

(3.) *Then, if preaching is fishing, we should adapt ourselves to the fish.*

Fish are like men and things generally, in this, that in order to enter into their secrets, or do much with them, you must come to their terms, and not try to compel them to come to yours. Some men can only be caught with the hook and line; others must be brought out on the spear, and others can be caught only when the sea is rough, tempestuous, and fraught with danger. Others appear to go in shoals, and can only be caught when scores and hundreds are being taken.

(4.) *Then, if preaching be fishing, it may not be the preacher's fault when his nets are empty.*

The material fisherman is compelled to observe times and seasons. You cannot catch shad in the Delaware or Hudson whenever you please. There are times when the best fisherman would be compelled to labor in vain. And there are other times when the water seems to be alive with fish impatient to be caught.

So with the Gospel fisherman. There are times when the most earnest and efficient are doomed to labor in vain. This may arise from the fact that there are no fish to be caught just there, or that, like flounders, the sinners and backsliders may be regaling themselves in the mud of worldliness or sinful pleasure, too much absorbed to heed anything else, and quite below the reach of all Gospel appliances, except it might be the spear or harpoon. These, however, are dangerous weapons for the preacher to use, unless he be an expert at the business, and is sure to kill them on the spot; for, if he only give them a flesh wound, they will be almost sure to turn into so many sword-fish, and then woe to the frail barque of the hapless fisherman.

III. That Gospel Sermons are Nets.

(1.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, it is right to make Sermons.*

A man throwing out great armfuls of twine, in hopes the fish would get entangled in it, that is what I call an extempore net. Did you ever see one? No! Nets are planned and made with care. Some pride themselves on being extempore preachers. But much of what is called extempore preaching is by no means extempore. When you come across a specimen of the genuine article, you

will find it little better than extemporized nonsense. It used to be thought unscriptural to make sermons; but that foolish notion has about died away, and now it is generally believed that sermons should be made. It is not so necessary now to impress upon the preacher that he should make his sermons, as it is to remind him of the one object for which they should be made, viz., to "catch men" for Jesus Christ, and not popularity and fame for the preacher.

(2.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, every time they are used, it should be with the view of catching something.*

It is quite unnecessary to remind ordinary fishermen of this. They never cast their nets to gratify the curiosity of the on-lookers, or to show with what skill and gracefulness it can be done. But just here the Gospel fisherman needs constantly to be on his guard. His danger is twofold: (1.) That he preach in a sort of perfunctory way, as part of his vocation. (2.) That, if gifted as an orator and sermonizer, he do it with little higher motive than to gain the admiration and applause of his fellowmen. The great end of Gospel preaching is to "catch men," not so much preaching for so much money.

(3.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, why not use them more than once?*

This, I am sure, is not an undue straining of the analogy. I am aware there is a strong opposition to repeating sermons; but it is a foolish prejudice, which intelligent people ought not to countenance. It is not my intention to advocate ministerial idleness, or to throw out the idea that a few sermons, well digested and oft repeated, is about all that any church should expect of its pastor. To sit respectfully and listen to many of our sermons once, is about all that any Christian congregation ought to be compelled to endure. To force them to go through a similar ordeal, every little while, would be a tax upon their patience to which they would not very long submit. All I insist upon is, that some sermons are so charged with Gospel truth and spiritual unction that it is as proper to repeat them as it is to repeat a lecture, a drama, or any of our soul-stirring hymns.

(4.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, what about those men who are fishing with borrowed tackle?*

I shall leave this class of men to be criticised by those fishermen who are blessed with such an abundance of intellectual twine that they never touch a net but of their own making. May their critique lean towards the apologetic and charitable.

(5.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, it is well that some preachers have a genius for Net-making.*

Of course, those who find no trouble in making all the nets they need will be likely to look upon special net-makers as a superfluous class of beings. But we who can so often utilize to advantage a little ready-made twine, a float, or a sinker, or even parts of the outline of a net, when they suit us, will be frank enough, I am sure, to speak in appropriate terms of the labors of those gifted men. Many a successful fisherman might be sorely puzzled to make a net, and many a powerful preacher, lacking the analytic and constructive faculties, may be a defective sermonizer. Such men thank God for those who are specially gifted with the faculties of which they are deficient, and gladly utilize their labors.

(6.) *Then, if Sermons are Nets, after being used, they should be washed and mended.*

After being used, especially if many fish were caught, there will be more or less of seaweed and slime adhering to the net, which, if folded up in it, and laid away, would do serious damage; hence the importance of washing nets. Then, again, nothing shows the defects and weak places in a net like fishing with it. The action of the water and the weight of the fish will cause a mesh here and a cord there to give way; hence the importance of *mending* nets.

So, when God's fishermen have a good time, and wield their nets successfully, alas, how the slime of self-importance, and the tenacious seaweed of pride cling to their cords and meshes. If all this be folded up and laid away in the sermon, its power will soon be destroyed, and it will be comparatively worthless when opened up again for service. Hence the importance of *washing* our nets.

And, then, sermons are like nets, in the fact that nothing shows their defects and weak places like using them. Many a sermon that looked quite to our liking on Sunday morning, has presented a very different appearance before the day was over. Alas, what disconnected cords and broken meshes. How rent and disfigured generally. How we toiled to get the unwieldy thing overboard, and wondered afterwards how we ever managed to get it hauled in.

We are all familiar with the unenviable experience which comes from defective and broken nets. May we have grace in the future to bring all such into the valley of humiliation and prayer, and there spreading them out before God, ask him to help us to "wash" and "mend" them.

"THE DAY OF TROUBLE."

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—PSALM, l., 15.

WHY not "deliver" without calling? He knows the sorrow and need of his people, and if it be in his heart to "deliver," why wait to be "called upon?" Amongst men, does not the knowledge of another's need often summon the true friend with his proffered help? Yes; but man dealing with man, and man dealing with God are essentially different things. When a man is in "trouble," and his neighbor helps him out, he is not in much danger of confounding his benefactor with himself, or of questioning, after all, if the deliverance did not come in some other way. But if God delivered men without being "called upon," they would soon become rationalistic, in their way of looking at things, and not only account for "the day of trouble;" but also, for their "deliverance," upon the mere principles of reason or natural law. It is the calling spirit which he seeks to evoke,—the spirit which recognizes him as the only "deliverer" of his people.

I. THE TIME,—"The day of trouble."

All know something of this day. No person grows grey without feeling its depressing weight and gloomy pressure. Some are in the grey dawn of the morning of this "day," others are at its meridian; and others are wearing on towards its close.

"The day of trouble" does not appear to be governed, as is our natural day, by planetary revolutions, or the swing of the pendulum. It may break upon us at any time, without any warning to herald its approach; and not unfrequently its sun and moon appear to "stand still." "The day of trouble" gathers the elements which compose it from various sources, and has in it experiences that are endlessly varied.

(1.) *Business troubles.* Heavy losses; large outlay, through affliction; dishonest debtors; business depression; failure in business ventures.

(2.) *Family trouble.* Perplexing cares; children afflicted; bereavement; poverty wayward son or daughter disgrace the family name.

(3.) *Personal trouble.* (1.) Bodily,—Pain; weakness and ailments, taking pleasure out of life. (2.) Spiritual: guilt of sin, doubts and fears; conscience condemning; theological questionings; mystery of providence. Cheer up, troubled, desponding spirit.

Think of the brevity of the time spoken of here. It is represented, not by a week, or month, or year, but by a day—"the day of trouble." This day of trouble, if we behave ourselves wisely during its trying hours, will be followed by an eternity of rest, riches, and joy, for—

> "Our troubles and our trials here
> Will only make us richer there,
> When we arrive at home."

II. The Request,—"Call upon me."

Verily, this is not man's way of doing things. Prosperity breeds friends; adversity thins them off. Few care about us when we are in "trouble." But that is just the time God shows his love for us, by inviting us to come to him for help. God here requests us, when help from all other quarters fail, to give him a call. "Call upon me," and out of my exhaustless resources all your wants shall be supplied. Take your prayer cheques and faith orders to his bank, and so ask "that your joy may be full." That is the divine recipe for "trouble." Don't worry, chafe, fret, despair. Simply give him a "call." He is always at home, and is never too busy, if you really want to see him. Notice the manner of calling: (1.) Humbly. (2.) Believingly.

(3.) Obediently. (4.) Perseveringly; Jacob like,—"Ask and ye shall receive, seek, knock."

III. The Promise,—"I will deliver thee."

The value of a promise depends on the person who makes it. When we hear an important promise or statement, we almost instinctively ask, *who said that?* The answer will determine our estimate as to its value and importance. Some persons make promises they are not able to fulfil; others could if they would, and others promise with neither the will nor the ability to keep their word. He who makes this promise is infinitely willing and able to make it good. Infinite power and love are behind it. It is a standing promise. "I will deliver thee." That is, he will deliver every time you "call upon him in the day of trouble." Man soon wearies of being called upon in the day of trouble; cannot "deliver." often; may help his friend today, but could not make a similar sacrifice to-morrow, or perhaps ever afterwards. God can always repeat himself; he can always "deliver" more gloriously the next time you "call upon him," if you only honor him by asking, and believing that he will.

"The sole return his love requires, for all his mercy's store,
Is that we should ask for more."

He knows all the facts and circumstances which cause your "day of trouble;" he also "knows how to deliver." (1.) By pardon. (2.) Cleansing. (3.) Stronger faith. (4.) Sustaining or restraining grace. (5.) Light, comfort, and guidance of his Holy Spirit. (6.) So over-ruling "the day of trouble" as to cause it to "work together for good."

Our knowledge is so limited that we cannot always distinguish between "the day of trouble" that we bring upon ourselves, and that which God brings upon us for correction and discipline. It is a great comfort, as taught in the text, that God does not appear to distinguish between them either. The promise is gloriously broad: "Call upon me in the day of trouble;" no matter who or what caused the "trouble;" whether your own imprudence, or my wisdom, and "I will deliver thee."

IV. The Result,—"Thou shalt glorify me."

(1.) By the faith that sees in him the only deliverer. (2.) By grateful recollections of past deliverances. (3.) By obedient service, and reliance upon his promised aid. (4.) By speaking of his power and goodness to others. (5.) By devotion to his cause. (6.) By praising him: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

GOD'S FLOCK.

"Fear not little flock."—LUKE, xii., 32.

The true followers of Jesus Christ have always been a little flock, compared with the rest of mankind.

I. Then the majority may be on the wrong side.

II. Then weakness does not of necessity involve danger or defeat.

III. Then heaven is God's gift, and not the reward of works.

IV. Then God does not judge by appearances.

V. Then God, who promises the kingdom, will surely keep his word.

VI. Then the Christian should be hopeful and happy.

In life's fiercest tribulations, we should never forget that God's promises are worthy of our strongest confidence, and our constant trust.

CONVICTION. The way to lose divine impressions is to disrespect them; the way to silence conscience is to ignore its teachings, and persist in a course which it constantly condemns.

AMONG WOLVES.

"As sheep among wolves."—MATT., ix., 16.

I. Then the Christian must expect enemies, and be ready to meet them.

II. Then the Christian's pathway is beset with dangers, and he should be on his guard.

III. Then the Christian has no hope of escape, if left to himself.

IV. Then the Christian's only hope is in the presence and power of "the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep."

At his presence the "wolves" scatter, and all enemies are held at bay.

CONSECRATION.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"—1st. CHRON., xxix., 5.

I. It is a personal consecration. "*Who.*"

II. It is a voluntary consecration. "*Who is willing?*"

III. It is an active consecration. "*His service.*"

IV. It is a reasonable consecration. "*To the Lord.*"

V. It is a prompt consecration. "*This day.*"

FAIR WARNING.

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast; that no man take thy crown."—REV., iii., 11.

MAN is servant, not master. Our talents imply stewardship, not ownership. God says, "Occupy till I come;" and "it is expected of a steward that he be found faithful."

I. THE POSSESSION IMPLIED. "That which thou hast." If unsaved, still we have—

(1.) The offer of salvation. (2.) The means of grace. (3.) The Bible. (4.) The commanding voice of conscience. (5.) The convictions of the Holy Ghost. (6.) The precious, ennobling possibilities of a blood-bought probation.

If saved, we have all these, and—

(1.) Saving faith. (2.) The witness of the Spirit. (3.) God's approving smile and fellowship. (4.) Saintly communion and fellowship. (5.) Place among the people of God. (6.) Hope of glory.

II. THE DUTY URGED. "Hold fast."

Let us not be deterred, lured or fascinated by the *world*, the *flesh*, or the *devil*, to loosen our hold upon, or to think lightly of those priceless possibilities of manhood and destiny. "Hold fast." Be

manly and decided. There is enough at stake to cause you to be desperately in earnest. Remember, that no person can "hold" these things "fast" for you but yourself. Therefore, show the mind and muscle of a wakeful, earnest man, in looking after your eternal interests. "Hold fast." (1.) Do it publicly. (2.) Persistently. (3.) Fearlessly. (4.) Humbly. (5.) In faith, and humble reliance upon Jesus Christ. (6.) Do it in self-defence. "That no man take thy crown."

III THE MOTIVE PRESENTED. "Behold, I come quickly."

This august, this awfully solemn event will involve the speedy reward of the righteous, and the overthrow and eternal punishment of the wicked.

> "He comes, he comes to call the nations to his bar,
> And raise to glory all who fit for glory are."

(1.) *The majesty and power of the Person coming.* "I." Describe him: (1.) His pre-incarnate glory. (2.) His humiliation and sacrifice. (3.) His mediatorial glory and coming to judgment.

(2.) *The solemnity of the event.* "I come."

Glorious event for the righteous; unspeakably dreadful to the wicked. Touch upon his errand, decisions, work, and the unchangeable destiny afterwards.

(3.) *The impressive manner of his approach.*—"Quickly." "In the twinkling of an eye."

(4.) *The attention the subject demands.* "Behold." This great crisis will be sprung upon no man unawares, or unwarned. It is coming but God calls attention to the fact. "Behold." The great Judge is coming; but the fact is announced before his arrival. He exhorts, entreats, warns, so that all may be ready to meet him with joy. He puts us on our guard: "For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

MEMORY.

"Thou shalt remember all the way."—DEUT., viii., 2.

I. The offspring of the past.

II. The handmaid of the present.

III. The parent of the future.

MORALITY. Many a man is taking quite a comfortable ride to perdition because he pays his fare; because he is liberal to the church, strictly honorable in his business, and carries his ticket of public confidence and social honor all the time.

THE CHURCH ON THE ROCK.

"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—MATT., xvi., 18.

EXEGETES and critics, friendly and unfriendly, have been busy with their spades and pickaxes about "this rock;" they have been trying to dig under it, and over it, and into it, for ages; but they have never been able to agree as to its actual size and composition.

I. *The Nature of the Christian Church.*

Loosely considered, the church is composed of all who make a public profession of religion, and have given their names as members. But the church on "the rock" is composed only of those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. All such are members of the true, spiritual, invisible church, because they accept and build upon the true and only foundation, "this rock."

II. *The Owner of the Christian Church.* "My church."

Jesus Christ is the true owner of the church, and he is not ashamed to claim his property. "My church."

(1.) His by *covenant engagement.* (2.) His by *costly purchase.* (3.) His by *actual conquest.* (4.) His by *divine oversight* and *providential care.*

III. *The foundation of the Christian Church.* "This rock."

(1.) It is a lasting foundation "rock." (2.) It is a special, specific foundation. "This rock." (3.) It is beneath and therefore rightly related to the church. "Upon this rock." The peculiar structure of "this rock" gives it special adaptation as the foundation of the Christian church. Any other foundation would crumble and give way under the tremendous, inconceivable pressure.

The church is built "upon this rock." (1.) For safety. (2.) Firmness. (3.) Elevation. (4.) Strength. (5.) Durability. (6.) Conquest.

IV. *The safety of the Christian Church.* "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

(1.) Here is implied *opposition.* "The gates of hell."

By this expression, we are to understand:—(1.) "The ravages of hades or death." Jesus was about to pass through the gates of death; but he would have Peter and the rest to know that their faith need not waver as he passed. Peter and many of his companions would soon be dashed through those gates by the bloody hand of persecution; but

still the *living* church, built "upon this rock," would live on. The expression, "The gates of hell," also means:—

(2.) The *wisdom* of hell. The gates of ancient cities being the seat of council, where judges, jurors and lawyers met, and where the shrewdest and wisest men of the city were to be found. It also means—

(3.) The *decisions* and *adverse judgments* of hell. The gates being the place of censure, condemnation, judicial decisions. Once, again, it means—

(4.) The *strength* and *defences* of hell. The gates of ancient cities denoted protection, resistance, safety.

(2.) Failure of the powers of darkness. "Shall not prevail against it." The persistent purposes of hell to thwart and overthrow the Christian church have signally failed. Great infidels have come forward, and with their Hercules' club, threatened to raze her speedily to the ground. They have all died and passed off the stage of action; but the Christian church lives on, and is just now girding herself, as never before, for the conquest of the world. We have no great infidels now; this century has not produced any. They have left behind them an endless progeny of self-proclaimed unbelievers. But they are only intellectual dwarfs and

whiffets, as compared with the great infidels of the past. These, with a degree of ignorance and audacity that would have caused their more formidable progenitors to blush, are still doing their best to oppose the progress of the Christian church' In spite of the distortions of infidelity, and the opposition of Satan, the Christian church is irresistibly encroaching upon the kingdom of darkness, and will never unbuckle her armor until the whole world is brought to plight the vow of e[illegible] loyalty to God: "until all shall bow at his command, and the King that rules in Salem's towers shall lighten every land." "Shall not prevail." Of course not. (1.) The power and love of God. (2.) The atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ. (3.) The gift of the Holy Ghost; the promises; the remedial agencies and appliances of the Gospel all go to confirm the declaration: "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

Civilization. Civilization is a climbing out of the degradation of barbarism to a broader, clearer outlook,—a running to God's great sycamore's of gravity, light, wind, steam, electricity, and climbing from crest to crest of conquering achievement, out of man's pigmy littleness, to the conquest of the world.

THE PILGRIM'S PATHWAY.

"And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they encamped there."—EXODUS, XV., 27.

ELIM, a camping place on the way to Canaan, the next stop after Marah, with its bitter waters.

I. *That, in life's pilgrimage, God crowns his people with constant blessings and diversified tokens of his goodness.*

These blessings, as here implied, are of great practical utility; they are—

(1.) *Essential,*—"Water." Water is one of the essentials of life; man needs it for drinking, cleansing, cooking, and for bringing the products of the earth to perfection. Without water this world would become a vast sepulchre of death, silently swinging in space. So, also, that which is essential to our spiritual well-being God has graciously supplied.

(2.) *Refreshing,*—"Palm trees." Oriental sun, scorching, journey tedious and exhausting. How

welcome and refreshing the cooling shade. So, on the way to the heavenly Canaan, God's people are not always marching over burning sands, and blistering in the scorching sun. There are many restful and refreshing Elims, "where the grass grows soft and green around sunny fountains, where the birds warble, and the palm trees" fling their inviting shade.

And, even in those places "where the pathway is most trying, where the sands are hottest, where the serpents hiss, and the sun pours down his fierce rays upon the weary pilgrim, even there our march is not comfortless; for around our very tents falls the heavenly manna, and fast by our side flows the water from the smitten rock; and steadfast in the van" is the very presence of Jehovah,—the pillar of cloud and of fire, both by night and by day.

(3.) *Diversified*,—"Wells and palm trees." Man's necessities are many and varied, and God has made provision to meet them. Some of the divine blessings would be almost useless without others. In the desert, the traveller sometimes needs shade from the melting sun as much as he needs water. So that, frequently, "wells" would be of little use without "palm trees," and "palm trees" would be of little avail without "wells." Manna would be almost worthless without water and shade; and

water and shade would be of little value without manna.

So, as a pilgrim to the heavenly Canaan, man's wants are also many and diversified. He needs constant and varied help, and God has bountifully provided it. It is the privilege of the faithful pilgrim, therefore, to borrow no trouble as to the future, since every possible want and crisis has been amply provided for by the God of providence and grace.

(4.) *Proportionate*,—"Twelve wells and threescore and ten palm trees."

God does not make wells simply to show that he has power over matter, or to demonstrate his excavating ability. He has done many marvels; but he has never attempted the marvel of an aimless job. If God digs a "well," or builds a "palm tree," we may be sure that he always has some practical purpose in view.

His gifts are ample, but not wasteful. "Twelve wells," one for each tribe. What more was needed for so brief a stay? "Threescore and ten palm trees." Ample shade for the seventy elders and their numerous descendants. God's provisions are with a view to necessity and the best interests of the pilgrim, not specially for their pleasure and comfort on the way; surely, in regard to

ourselves, his provisions have been bountiful, especially if we consider how little we deserve, and how much more we have than others who are better perhaps than we.

II. *That, in life's pilgrimage, God's blessings should be appropriated and enjoyed.* "They encamped there."

They not only slaked their thirst, but they prepared to rest and recuperate. God is pleased when his people appreciate and enjoy the blessings he bestows.

This should be done with a profound sense of gratitude and dependence, and a full determination to devote time and strength and all to his service. This spirit brings upon us God's approval and blessing, with power to conquer and triumph in the future.

III. *That, in life's pilgrimage, Elim, with its refreshing shade, is frequently not far from Marah, with its bitter waters.*

Therefore, as pilgrims, we should not be too much elated or depressed with our camping places. In the history of the Zion-bound traveler, it should not be forgotten, that it is always better further on.

(1.) When at Marah, with its bitter waters, let us not become *bitter, too;* but let us look around

and see if something be not within reach to remove the bitterness; meanwhile, hoping for Elim, with its sweet water and refreshing shade.

(2.) While pushing on under the pillow of cloud and of fire, the bitterness of Marah will only enable you to enjoy the blessings of Elim with a greater relish.

IV. *That, in life's pilgrimage, we should remember that we are not yet home, only pilgrims on the way.*

Our immortality would starve to death on the biggest and richest oasis this desert world could give us, if we should attempt to make it our abiding home. So, they did not buy the land, or build a city, they only "encamped there."

God would, no doubt, lead us to many rich Elim resting places, only he knows we would at once begin to *buy* and *build*, and become so enamored of our surroundings, that we should forget the heavenly Canaan for which we started. They did not try to buy up the land about Elim, or leave a colony in possession of it, with a view to future speculation. Under the shadow of those grand old palm trees, they did not drive their stakes so deep, or tie down their tents so fast, that it would tare them to pieces to pull them up again.

They enjoyed the blessings of their resting place; but, so far as we know, in obedience to the

movements of "the pillar of cloud," they struck their tents as promptly at Elim, with its comforts, as at Marah, with its bitter waters. That is the kind of spirit which enables God's people to shun many a bitter Marah, and enjoy many delightful Elim blessings, while on their way to the promised rest.

As pilgrims, however,—

(1.) We should expect *enemies.* The fiery flying serpents are still in the land through which we pass. The fierce men of Amalek have lost none of their hatred for God's Israel, and may at any time attack us from front or rear.

(2.) We should not expect *home comforts* while on a *journey;* but should look for *privations* as well as comforts, and not be too much influenced by either.

(3.) We should expect *changes.* It is through changing scenery and vicissitudes that the promised land is reached.

As pilgrims to that blessed country, everything depends upon our *going forward;* on that point we should be beyond the *capability of a doubt.* Heaven is at the end of the journey, not at the middle, or any intermediate point. How worthy of all our toil! Let us think often on the end, that we get not weary of the way.

PLOTTINGS OF INIQUITY.

"We will say, some evil beast hath devoured him."—GEN. xxxvii. 20.

THIS text is no part of revelation. It is a premeditated falsehood, agreed to and told by Joseph's brothers, to account for his absence.

I. *That wicked men dare not trust each other to explain things, but must agree to falsify and deceive.* "We will say."

They would not dare to trust each other to tell how things happened, but must agree upon falsehood to shield themselves from obloquy and disgrace. When did ten honest men have to get together and agree just what they would say, when called to explain any matter? Men, whose morality is wrong, find it hard to give a consistent explanation of things. Unless they get their heads together, and smoothe things out, and round off the corners, they will be sure to be inconsistent and betray themselves. Those wicked brethren are only representatives of modern men, when they agreed to lie their way out of a most heartless

piece of iniquity, and said among themselves:— "We will say."

II. *That it is a characteristic of wicked men to lay the blame of their sins upon others.* "We will say, a wild beast," etc.

From the very first it was so. Adam struck upon that mean device, and threw the blame of his sin upon his wife: "The woman that thou gavest me." I know of no instance in the Bible that so clearly indicates the strength of the tendency as this. Bear in mind, that Adam had only been recently married, and that he thought the world and all of his wife. Of course, if he had been married a few years, he would have resembled many modern husbands so closely that we might not have thought it so remarkable; for I have seen some husbands who, after a few years, could say very ungallant and humiliating things to their wives, and about them, especially if trying to cover up their own iniquity. I know not what some men would do, if there was nothing and nobody they could blame for their sins. Some blame one thing or person, and some another; but, like Joseph's brethren, they know there is no "wild beast," and they must sooner or later confess their sins and say, "We are verily guilty."

III. *That wicked men feel there is a time coming*

when they must make out a case,—must tell how things happened. "We will say, an evil beast," etc.

With all its skeptical quibblings and unfairness, human nature cannot shake itself loose from this conviction. Call it what we will, explain it as we may, there is in every man the instinct of retribution. We feel that inquest will be made for the doings of the past, and that the consequences will be disastrous, if we fail to make a satisfactory showing.

Sin is sin, though covered up and unsuspected. Their lying story was believed; but their sin was still a fact unchanged, and *they knew it.* When Jacob recommended them to go to Egypt for food, the word Egypt shot through them like a shaft of doom. The old man was quite mystified, when he saw the way the boys looked at each other when he mentioned the word Egypt. Sinners are driven to silence and terror sometimes, when certain propositions are made, or words are uttered, when the only thing they can do is to interpret each other's looks. By and bye, when called upon to tell how things happened—*what shall we say?*

PREACHERS IN PRISON.

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison," &c.—ACTS, xvi., 23–40.

TIME, A.D., 53. Place, Phillippi. The spot where Cæsar fought his great battle with Brutus and Cassius, nearly a hundred years before. Look at preceding verses, for cause of their trouble and arrest.

I. THE PREACHERS. "Paul and Silas," two honored servants of God, on their first missionary tour to Europe.

(1.) *Their punishment.* (1.) "Many stripes." (2.) "In the inner prison." (3.) "Their feet fast in the stocks." Cell windowless and damp; stocks irritating and painful.

(2.) *Their piety.* "Prayed and sang." Only heroes of the highest type could have prayed in such a place. If they cannot sing and pray at midday, they can at midnight.

(3.) *Their noise.* "The prisoners heard them." They will have all the more attentive audience by the place and time. Noise was no new thing in

the old prison. Groans, curses, threats had often echoed through those gloomy corridors; but never until now did they echo the voice of prayer and praise.

(4.) *Their deliverance.* (1.) It was supernatural. "A great earthquake." (2.) It was instantaneous. "Immediately the doors were opened." (3.) It was complete. "Every man's bands were loosed." Suddenly, interrupting both worshippers and listeners, a great commotion is heard; the old prison swayed to and fro, every door flew open, and all the prisoners' chains fell off.

II. The Penitent. "The jailer."

The exciting scenes of the afternoon and evening had passed, and "at midnight" the jailer is fast asleep.

(1.) *His surprise.* "Waking out of his sleep." Surprised at the swaying of the prison, the open doors, and the supernatural aspect of things generally.

(2.) *His fear.* "That the prisoners had fled." With all obstacless removed, nothing was more reasonable than for him to think so. Prisoners generally have not much conscience, when the alternative of bondage or freedom is before them.

(3.) *His desperation.* "Would have killed himself." Believing his own life to be forfeited, the

first thought of the jailer was that of suicide. That was the highest point to which heathen culture could rise. The advice of Seneca was: "If life is pleasant, live; if not, you have a right to return whence you came."

(4.) *His instructions.* "Do thyself no harm." How did Paul know he was going to do himself harm?

(5) *His encouragement.* "We are all here." Paul was in a cell under a cell which had no light but through a hole in the ceiling, which was the floor of the upper cell. How then could Paul vouch for the presence of all the prisoners? By supernatural illumination, no doubt.

(6.) *His penitence.* "Came trembling." The marvels he had witnessed; the unheard of condition, both of the prisoners and the prison, had aroused his conscience, and smitten him with an awful sense of guilt and alarm.

(7.) *His humility.* "Fell down before Paul." There are earthquake crises in life when God's despised people are appreciated,—crises when they only can allay the troubled spirit, and answer the momentious questions which agitate and alarm the human heart.

(8.) *His inquiry.* "What must I do to be saved?" The danger implied in this question is not that

which prompted him to suicide a little while ago. The presence of all the prisoners saved him from that.

(1.) The inquiry involves a conviction of guilt and danger implied in the word "saved."

(2.) A conviction of the importance of action or effort implied in the word "must."

(3.) Anxiety to do what may be required, implied in the words "What must I *do?*"

(4.) Personal responsibility implied in the words, "What must *I* do?" We lose ourselves in the crowd. We weigh ourselves by putting somebody else in the opposite scale. True penitence individualizes the man, and makes his own personal guilt and danger the ruling factor in his consciousness.

III. The Pardon.

(1.) Its condition,—"Believe." (2.) Its object,—"Jesus Christ." (3.) Its certainty,—"Thou shalt be saved." (4.) Its characteristics. (1.) Sympathetic,—"Washed their stripes." A man should doubt his conversion, if he does not seek to undo the wrongs of yesterday, or try to heal the wounds he has had a hand in making. The first thing Christianity does is to drive men into their yesterdays. (2.) Hospitable,—"Into his house." (5.) Liberality,—"Set meat before them." (6.) Public and

prompt,—"Baptised straightway." (7.) Contagious, —"And all his."

One saved man has a tendency to produce another. The jailer, though a heathen, had some manhood and character about him, or his family would not have been so ready to follow him with such confidence.

Why have we now for the first time, as the apostles preach the Gospel in Europe, whole families brought to God? Because family religion is a characteristic of European Christianity, as compared with Asiatic Christianity. Christianity in Europe, and I am pleased to add, in America, is more than imposing ceremony in temple or cathedral, it leavens the family. The midnight worship of these two prisoners ended in a regular old-time revival service. There was prayer, praise, preaching, penitence, pardon and public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE, XV. 11-24.

I. His Departure and Degradation.
II. His Repentance and Resolution.
III. His Return and Reception.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

"See my zeal for the Lord."—2 KINGS, x., 16.

I. WHAT IT IS NOT.

(1.) *It is not a selfish zeal.* It does not try to unduly axalt self. Not personal glory or aggrandisement, like Henry VIII, whose apparent "zeal for the Lord" caused him to throw off the authority of the Pope, but in reality only to become a Pope himself.

(2.) *It is not a denominational zeal.* Denominational zeal is only selfish zeal, shifted from self to sect; simply a transfer of energy and affection from self to party. Possible to labor hard for sect, and yet be all wrong as to motive.

(3.) *It is not zeal for forms or non-essentials.* It holds the old land-marks with a grasp which only death can palsy, but leaves conscience to deal with non-essentials, adopting the Gospel motto: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.,'

(4.) *It is not therefore a persecuting zeal.* It was this persecuting zeal that sent out the Crusaders, and left the bones of millions to bleach in the sun

of an Asiatic sky. It was this kind of zeal that enacted the slaughter of St. Bartholomew, and caused the fires of Smithfield to blaze.

I. What it is.

(1.) The nature of Christian work is such that true zeal ignores all merely selfish considerations in its efforts to glorify God and rescue the perishing.

(2.) *It is love at work.* Love working and planing for the glory of God in the salvation of the world. This, if done wisely and efficiently, must be done largely within denominational lines; but it by no means takes its inspiration from that fact.

(3.) *Self and party are lost sight of, and love to God and man becomes the inspiration of the worker.* Christian zeal, taking its inspiration from such a source, and aiming at such an end, cannot but operate with permanent and blessed results.

Oh, that such zeal were universal, in the church of God. Like ten thousand fires in a prairie. it would soon blend together, and wrap the world in a blaze of light and revival fire.

Tendencies.—Tendencies forecast destiny. A tree leaning east never falls west; a tree not only lies as it falls, but it falls as it leans.

ADAM IN EDEN.

"And the Lord God formed man. . . . And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden," &c.—GEN. ii., 7-9.

IS that so? This book attempts the bold endeavor of a calm historic statement of the origin of things. But can it be that God really made man and his dwelling-place? What, then, becomes of *protoplasm*, and *bioplasm*, and *evolution?* We want to know, for we are told that nobody made man or his dwelling-place, that they only *evolved.* The text teaches several things concerning God:—

I. HIS POWER.

(1.) *Physical.* The might involved in the creation and maintainance of the universe. As much power displayed in preservation of universe as in its creation. He "who built the chariots and harnessed the steeds of the solar system, and made them capable of infinite and untiring travel, and guides them in their long intersecting highways, without collision or accident;—He who built this

vast car of our earth, and propels it along its track around the sun, at the rate of sixty-eight thousand miles an hour, laden with forests, oceans, towns, and cities, and about fourteen hundred million passengers" [LOWREY], must be a being of inconceivably tremendous physical power.

(2.) *Intellectual.* The thought and intelligence involved in the works of nature; the unity of design, harmony of motion, and proportion of parts visible everywhere in nature, from the majesty of revolving worlds to the structure and polish of an insect's wing, all attest the work and power of a boundless intelligence.

God is not only powerful, but he is intelligently so. He never works but by a plan, never experiments, and therefore never drops unfinished anything he begins. Nature carries no half hinges. One thing is the complement of another. One bird's wing implies two, and back of that an atmosphere in which to ply them.

II. HIS WISDOM.

(1.) We see God's wisdom here in the order of events: (1.) "He planted a garden," and (2.) "There he put the man." God does not send men into this world without an errand, and in a state of contention and scrambling for a foothold and a living. That is about all that life is to thousands;

but it is the result of man's wickedness, not God's plan. Every man has his own work, his own garden, which no other person will ever be able to till quite as well as he. Obedience to God will place every man ultimately in his allotted sphere.

Notice the wisdom of God in the order of events here. "He planted a garden; and there he put the man." He did not first make the occupant, and then the residence; but first the sphere, then the man to fill it. First the garden, then the gardener. There is a relevancy, an order of sequence, in the doings of the Almighty.

Just here, man is constantly making blunders. We work too much by impulse, and without forethought or plan. We do things without regard to order and fitness. We get the gardener before the garden, and then wonder and worry as to what we are going to do with him. Thus, it is, that the results of our doings are so often an incumbrance, rather than a profit, leaving so many things on our hands that fit in nowhere, and for which we can find no place.

(2.) In providing so bountifully for the wants of man, both present and future: (1.) *Present.*—In causing all manner of fruits and vegetables to spring out of the earth, and in stocking the earth, air and water with creatures for man's food and

happiness. Adam's Eden-home contained much more than the mere necessaries of life. It was a scene of surpassing beauty and loveliness.

(2.) *Future.*—In filling the bowels of the earth with those priceless treasures which he saw would be required, in order to man's highest civilization and well-being. Some people are a little fearful that God has made some miscalculation in the size of his great coal-yards, and that they are going to give out in the not very distant future. I think, however, we shall show our *wisdom* by *trusting* his, and believing that both the number of winters and on-coming coal-scuttles have been amply provided for.

III. His Goodness.

(1) In providing a home for man. "A garden eastward in Eden." Man's nature is such that he cannot fully develop until blessed with the atmosphere and surroundings of home.. Until a man becomes bolted down to the framework of society, by the fastenings and restrictions of home, he is like an engine thrown loose on the floor where it is intended to operate. He has not the grip and purchase that God made him to have.

(2.) God's goodness is also seen in the size of Adam's home. "A garden." Why not something larger? God's idea of human vocation is not dis-

tribution, but concentration. Not farming a township, but tilling a garden. No man can be a gardener, a doctor, a lawyer, a banker, and a preacher, and succeed in either. He must fail in each, if he attempts all. The divine intimation here is, that one vocation is enough for any man; and that, having found the right one, our business is "to dress it, and to keep it."

(3.) In putting him in possession of his new home. "There he put the man." I am pleased to find this statement, especially as Adam got into trouble so soon afterwards. If the Lord had only pointed out the garden, and left Adam to find it, he might have doubted, after the fall, whether he had not gotten into the wrong place, and whether such a calamity could have befallen him in a God-selected residence.

Learn, here, that however clearly we may be able to trace the divine hand in bringing us into any position or calling, we may there yield to the tempter, and fall. That God can build no Eden this side the gates of glory which man cannot curse and wither, by listening to the suggestions of the devil.

(4.) In providing a wife for Adam. "Brought her unto him." The composition of the first divinely ordained home was husband and wife,—

one man married to one woman. What would a Mormon or Socialist have done in those days? The Eden family, and the about equal distribution of the sexes, prove that Mormonism and Socialism are not of God. We learn, from this narrative, that there is no matrimonial alliance, however well assorted, which sin cannot blight and blast into a curse. I am told, that sometimes a romantic couple goes into the great Kentucky Cave, and there, far away from all light, except that of a flickering taper, they have the marriage ceremony performed. From their utter want of adaptation, one might suspect that a great many couples were not only married in some such place, but that they had done all their courting there, with the light put out.

Yet, I am convinced that much married misery springs, not from a blunder in the choice of a companion, but from a blunder of conduct in one or both afterwards. Loyalty to God is the only sure guarantee of abiding blessedness in married life. Eve's influence upon Adam was all right until she began to question whether the devil was not about as worthy of belief as God. When husband or wife would about as soon do wrong as right,—as soon eat the forbidden fruit as let it alone, neither fitness nor adaptation can make their union happy, or their lives a mutual blessing.

THE ACCEPTED CALL.

"When thou saidst, seek ye my face," &c.—PSALM xxvii., 8.

I. GOD'S CALL. "Seek ye my face."

(1.) It teaches that peace with God is not a human device, but a divine revelation. "Thou saidst." True religion originates with God.

(2.) Indicates what religion is. "Seek ye my face,"—not my church, or book, or ministers, but Me.

(3.) It implies estrangement. "Seek."

(4.) That estrangement may cease.

II. MAN'S REPLY. "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Reply was:—

(1.) *Personal.* "I."

(2.) *Prompt.* "When thou saidst."

(3.) *Emphatic.* "Thy face, Lord, *will* I seek."

(4.) *Thorough.* Reply, almost an echo of call. David practically said, "I mean just what God means."

(5.) It came from *right place.* "My heart said." Lips lie, heart never.